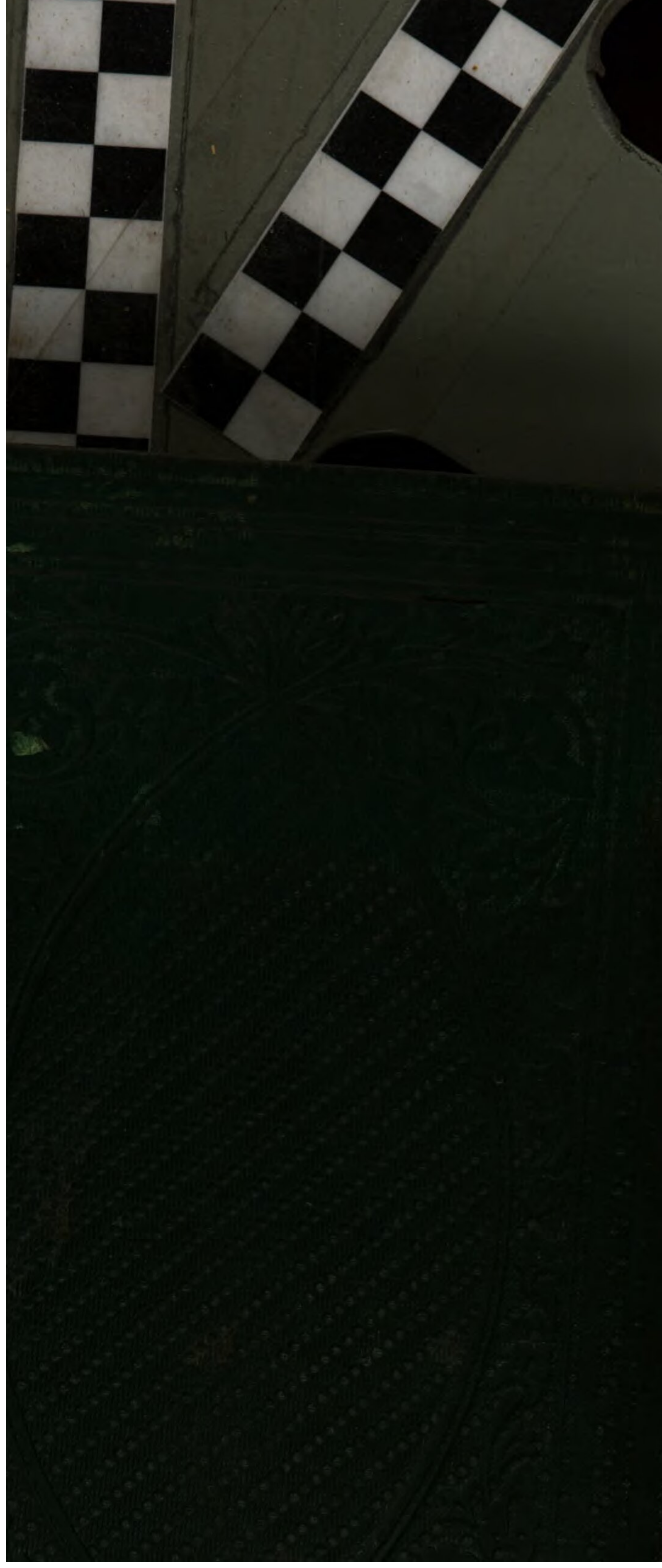




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Trollope

LINDISFARN CHASE.

LINDISFARN CHASE

A Novel.

BY
THOMAS ADOLPHUS TROLLOPE,

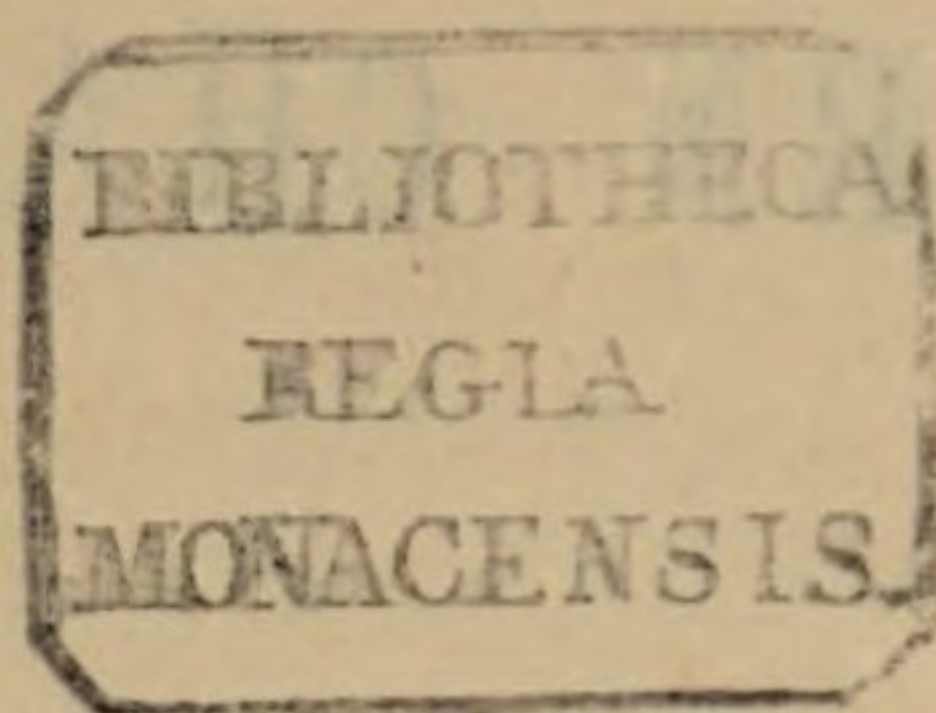
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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE
SILVERTON AND ITS ENVIRONS	1

CHAPTER II.

AT WESTON FRIARY	12
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY IN THE CLOSE	31
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY AT THE CHASE	59
--------------------------------	----

CHAPTER V.

MARGARET'S FIRST DAY AT HOME	72
-------------------------------------	----

CHAPTER VI.

WALTER ELLINGHAM	96
-------------------------	----

CHAPTER VII.

MY "THINGS"	117
--------------------	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET'S DEBUT IN THE CLOSE	129
--------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
THE PARTY AT THE CHASE	157

CHAPTER X.

AT DINNER, AND AFTERWARDS	176
----------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

MR. MERRITON PAYS SOME VISITS	206
--------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

FRED'S LUNCHEON AT THE CHASE	233
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARTY AT THE FRIARY	251
--------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NOSEY STONE"	272
--------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XV.

THE "CARTE DE TENDRE"	293
------------------------------	-----

LINDISFARN CHASE.

Part First.

CHAPTER I.

SILVERTON AND ITS ENVIRONS.

I DOUBT much, whether I could invent a fiction, that should be more interesting to my readers, than the authentic bit of family history I am about to offer them. The facts happened, and the actors in them were, with very little difference, such as they will be represented in the following pages. But although nearly half a century has passed, since the circumstances occurred, it has been necessary, in order to justify the publication of them, to make such changes in names and localities, as should obviate the possibility of causing annoyance or offence to individuals still living.

The episcopal city in, and in the neighbourhood of which, the events really took place, shall therefore be called Silverton ; and it shall be placed in one of our south-westernmost counties, where no search among the county families will, it may be safely asserted, enable any too curious reader to identify the real personages of the history.

The ancient and episcopal city of Silverton is one of the most beautifully situated towns in England. Seated in the midst of a wide valley on the banks of a river, which about a mile below the town becomes tidal, and three miles further reaches the sea, its environs comprise almost every variety of English scenery. The flat bottom of the valley is occupied with watermeads, rendered passable to those acquainted with the locality and impassable to strangers, by a labyrinthine system of streams and paths, diversified by an infinity of sluices, miniature locks, and bridges removable at pleasure after the fashion of draw-bridges. The town itself, with the exception of the physically and morally low parts of it lying immediately in the vicinity of the bridge over the river Sill, is built on a slight elevation sufficient to raise it above the damp level of the watermeadows. The highest point of this eminence was once entirely occupied by the extensive buildings of Silverton Castle. Now the picturesque ivy-grown keep only remains ; and the rest of the space

backed by the high city wall, which on that side of the city has been preserved, forms the admirably kept and much admired garden of Robert Falconer, Esq., the senior partner of the firm of Falconer and Fishbourne, the wealthy, long-established, and much respected bankers of Silverton.

On ground immediately below the site of the old castle, and sufficiently lower for the two buildings to group most admirably together, stands the grand old Cathedral, with its two massive towers, one at either angle of the west front, which looks towards the declivity and the valley. The space between the Cathedral and the site of the castle, is occupied by that inmost sanctuary and privileged spot of a cathedral city, the Close. The old city is not in any part of it a noisy one. For though it was formerly the seat of a prosperous cloth trade and manufacture, commerce and industry have long since deserted it, preferring for their modern requirements, coal-measures to water-meadows. But a still deeper quietude broods over the Close. The beautifully kept gravel walk—it is more like a garden walk than a road—which wanders among exquisitely shaven lawns, from one rose-covered porch to another of the irregularly placed prebendal houses, is rarely cut up by wheels. The Deanery gardens, and those of two or three other of the prebendal residences run up to a remaining fragment of the old city wall to

the right hand of the castle keep, as those of Mr. Falconer the banker do on the left-hand side of the ancient tower, supposing the person looking at them to stand facing the west front of the Cathedral.

It is a pleasant spot to stand on, and a pleasant view to face;—it was so forty years ago, and I suppose it still is so, despite the cutting down of canonries, and other ravages of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. If one stood not quite opposite the centre of the west front of the church, but sufficiently to the left of that point to catch a view of the southern side of the long nave, and the southern transept with its round-headed Saxon windows and arches,—for that part of the building belonged to an earlier period than the nave;—of the mouldering and ivy-grown, but still sturdy looking and lofty keep of the old castle on the higher ground behind;—of the fragments of city wall to the right and left, covered with the roses and other creeping plants of the banker's garden on the one side, and of those of the cathedral dignitaries on the other;—of the noble woods of Lindisfarn Chase on the gentle swell of the hill, which shut in the horizon in that direction at a distance of some seven or eight miles from the city;—and of the sleepy quiet Close in the immediate foreground, with its low roofed, but substantial, roomy, and exceedingly comfortable

grey stone houses showing with so admirably picturesque an effect on the brilliant green of the shaven lawns, which run close up to the walls of them;—if one stood, I say, so as to command this prospect, one would be apt to linger there awhile.

Suppose the hour to be ten A.M. on a September morning. The last bell is ringing for morning service. Dr. Lindisfarn, in surplice, hood, and trencher-cap, is placidly sauntering across the Close from his house, next to the Deanery, with a step that seems regulated by the chime of the bell, to take his place as canon in residence at the morning service. Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarn, Senior Canon, is literally if not ecclesiastically speaking, always in residence. For he loves Silverton Close better than any other spot of earth's surface; and keeps a curate on his living of Chewton in the Moor, some fifteen miles from the city. Dr. Lindisfarn stepping across to morning service, pauses an instant, as he observes with a slight frown an insolently tall dandelion growing in the Close lawn; and makes a mem. in his mind to tell the gardener that the Chapter cannot tolerate such slovenly gardening. A little troop of choristers in surplices and untasselled trencher-caps, headed by old Peter Glenny the organist, are coming round the northern corner of the west front from the schoolroom. The Rev. Mr. Thor-

burn, the Minor Canon, who has to chant the service, is not yet in sight; for he was officiating as president of a glee club till not the smallest of the small hours last night; and being rather late this morning is now coming up the hill from the lower part of the town, at a speed which will just suffice to bring him to his place in the choir in time to dash off with "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord," at the exact instant that the bell sounds its last note, and Dr. Lindisfarn at the same moment raises his benignant face from the trencher-cap in which he has for a moment hidden it, on entering his stall, moving as he did so with a sort of *suant*, mechanical, yet not ungraceful action, which seemed to combine a bow to the assembled congregation, with a meditative prayer condensed into the briefest possible time. The rooks are cawing *their* morning service the while in the high trees behind Mr. Falconer's house, a large mansion more modern and less picturesque than the Canons' houses, a little behind and to the left of the spot where I have supposed the contemplator of this peaceful scene to take his stand. The morning sun is gilding and lighting up the distant Lindisfarn woods; a white mist is lying on the water-meads; and a gentle drowsy hum ascending from the lower districts of the city. The sights and sounds that caress the eye and ear, are all suggestive of peace-

fulness and beauty ; and are poetized by a flavour of association which imparts an infinite charm to the scene.

And there were no heretic Bishops or free-thinking Professors in those days throughout all the land. There was no Broad Church ; and "earnestness" had not been invented. It was a mighty pleasant time ; at least, it was so inside Cathedral Closes. Dissenters were comparatively few anywhere, and especially in such places as Silverton. They were understood to be low and noxious persons, with greasy faces and lank hair who, in a general way, preferred evil to good. It was said that there were some few of these Pariahs in the low part of the town ; and even that they met for their unhallowed worship in some back lane, under the ministry of a much persecuted and almost outlawed shoemaker. But of course, none of these persons ever ventured to sully the purity of the Close with their presence. The heresiarch cobbler felt himself to be guilty, and slunk by like a whipped hound, if he met any one of the cathedral dignitaries in the street. The latter of course ignored the existence of any such obscure and hateful sectarians ; although it was said that more than one denizen of the Close had been known to listen, though under protest, to a story that Peter Glenney had of a scapegrace nephew of his having once entered the con-

venticle in the lower town, and having then found the impious wretches singing hymns to a hornpipe tune!

The base creatures, who were guilty of such enormities, were too few and too obscure to cause any trouble or scandal in the dignified Church-loving Silverton society. If a Bishop did endow a favourite son or son-in-law with an accumulation of somewhat incompatible preferments, if a reverend Canon *did* absent himself for a year or two together from Silverton, or hold preferment with his canonry not strictly tenable with it, leave some of the little churches in the city unserved some Sunday evening, because he was engaged to a dinner-party in the country, or indulge in a habit of playing whist deep into Sunday morning; or if a Minor Canon *were* found hearing the chimes at midnight elsewhere than in his study or his bed, or did chance to get into trouble about sporting without a licence, or did stroll into his country church to take some odds or ends of surplice duty in his shooting gaiters, while he left his dog and gun in the vestry,—why there was no “chiel amang them” to take invidious note of these things, much less to dream of printing them! In short, the time of which I have been speaking, and am about to speak, was that good old time, which *nous autres* who are *sur la retour* remember so well; and which was so pleasant, that it is

quite sad to think that it should have been found out to be so naughty !

It would seem nevertheless that there had been still better times at a yet more remote period. For there were, even forty years ago, individuals in the Silverton world, who looked with regret at the march of progress, which had even then commenced. And old Dennis Wyvill the verger, who was upwards of eighty years old, used to complain much of a new-fangled order of the Chapter that the litany should be chanted, declaring that in good *Dane* Burder's days morning service was over, and all said, and the door locked afore eleven o'clock. But thus it is ! "*Ætas parentum*," says the poet in the same mind with old Dennis Wyvill the verger, "*Ætas parentum pejor avis tulit nos nequiores, mox daturos progeniem vitiosiore*."

The progress of time has not quite spared either, the material beauty of Silverton or its environs. One or two rows of "semi-detached villa residences," have made their appearance in different parts of the outskirts of the city, which, however charming they may be as residences to the dwellers in them, do not add to the beauty of the place. One of these more especially has caused the destruction of a clump of elm trees, which formerly stood near the spot where the fragment of city wall that bounds Mr. Falconer's garden,—or rather, that which was his at the date of this his-

tory—comes to an end, and which filled most charmingly to the eye the break in the landscape between that object and the grass green water-meads below; and has thus done irreparable injury to dear old Silverton. For the rest, the city and its surrounding country are much as they used to be. The woods of Lindisfarn Chase beyond, and as one may say, behind the town, supposing it to face towards the valley of the Sill, are as rich in verdure and as beautiful as ever. The less thickly, but still well wooded park-like scenery of Wanstrow Manor, the residence forty years ago, of the Dowager Lady Farnleigh, is unchanged on the more gradually rising opposite bank of the river. The quaintly picturesque view of the water-meadows up the stream, closed at the turn of it westwards about two miles above Silverton bridge by the village and village church of Weston Friary, is unaltered. In the opposite direction below the bridge, the population has somewhat increased; and the houses, most of them of a poor description, are more numerous than of yore. And the new cottages, although somewhat more fitted for decent human habitation than the old ones, are less picturesque. Modern squalor and poverty are especially unsightly. It is as if the ill qualities of the old and the new had been selected and combined to the exclusion of the redeeming qualities of either.

Further from the city the aspect of the country is naturally still more unchanged. The rich and brilliantly green meadows and pasture lands in the lower grounds ; the coppice-circled fields of tillage of the upland farms, the red soil of which contrasts so beautifully with the greenery of the woodlands ; the gradually increasing wildness and unevenness of the country, as it recedes from the valley of the Sill, and approaches the higher ground of Lindisfarn Chase on the Silverton side of the stream ; and the curiously sudden and definitely marked line, which separates the Wanstrow Manor farms from the wide extent of moorland which stretches away, many a mile to the northwards and along the coast, on the opposite or left-hand side of the little river ; all this, of course, is as it was. And it was, and is, very beautiful.

CHAPTER II.

AT WESTON FRIARY.

THERE were two roads open to the choice of any one wishing to go from Wanstrow Manor to Lindisfarn Chase. The most direct crossed the Sill by Silvertown bridge and passed through that city. The distance by this road was little more than eight miles. But the pleasanter way either for riding or walking was to cross the river at Weston Friary, and thus avoiding the city altogether, and reaching the wilder and more open district of the Chase, almost immediately after quitting the valley at Weston, so as to make the greatest part of the distance by the green lanes, and unenclosed commons which at that point occupied most of the space between the lowlands of the valley and Lindisfarn woods. The distance by this route was a good ten miles, however. The highest part of the ground of the Chase, which shut in the horizon to the westward behind Silvertown, has been mentioned as being about seven or eight

miles from the city. But the fine old house, which took its name from the Chase, was not so far. Nor was it visible from the town. A little brawling stream called Lindisfarn brook ran hiding itself at the bottom of a narrow ravine between Silverton and the Lindisfarn woods; and fell into the Sill a mile or two above Weston Friary. This little valley and its brook were about three miles from the city, and four or five from the wood-covered summit above mentioned. The ground fell from this latter in a gentle slope all the way down to the brook, with the exception of the last two or three hundred feet, the sudden and almost precipitous dip of which gave the valley the character of a ravine. The house was situated about half way down this gentle declivity, about two and a half miles from the top, that is, and as much from the brook, which was crossed by a charming little ivy-grown bridge high above the stream, carrying the carriage road from Silverton to Lindisfarn. The same little brook had to be crossed by those who took the longer way from Wanstrow, and by those who came from Weston Friary to the Chase; and for foot passengers, there was a plank and rail across the stream. Those travelling this route on horseback, however, had to ford the Lindisfarn brook; and in sloppy weather the banks were apt to be very soft and rotten, insomuch that many a pound of mud from

the Lindisfarn brook ford had been brushed from bedraggled riding habits in the servants' halls of the Chase and the Manor. For the intercourse between these two mansions was very frequent, and the ride by Weston Friary, as has been said, was, especially to practised riders, the pleasantest.

Indeed for those who like open country, and have no objection to a little mud and a moderate jump or two, there could not be a better country for a ride than all this part of the Lindisfarn Chase property. In the driest weather the turf of the lanes and commons was rarely too hard, but in wet weather it was certainly somewhat too soft. This was most the case on the Weston Friary side of the Lindisfarn brook. On the other side the ground rose towards the Chase more rapidly, and as the higher land was reached, became naturally drier. But though there was a slight rise from the ford on the other side, sufficient to cause the brook to seek its way into the river Sill a mile or two further up the stream instead of falling into it at the village of Weston, this elevation of the ground between the valley of Lindisfarn brook and the water-mead around the village, was not sufficient at that point to prevent all the intervening land from being of a very wet and soft description. If I have succeeded in making the topography of the environs of Silver-ton at all clear to the reader, it will be understood,

that this same swell of the ground, which between Weston and the ford over the brook of Lindisfarn was a mere tongue of marshy soil, rose gradually but rather rapidly in the direction down the Sill, till it formed the comparatively high ground, on which Silverton was built, and from which the Lindisfarn woods could be seen on the opposite side of the valley of the brook, which had there become a deep ravine, as has been described. A good country road, coming from the interior of the country along the valley of the Sill, passed through the village of Weston Friary on its course to Silverton, finding its way along the edge of the water-meadows, and making in that direction also a singularly pretty ride. This road having crossed the mouth of the brook by a bridge called Paulton's bridge, nearly two miles above Weston, held its way along the tongue of low land which has been described, keeping close to the bank of the river. Just above Weston, this space between the two streams was not above half a mile in width, and it was all open common, divided off from the road however at that point, by a low timber fence, consisting of two rails only, which, traced at a period when such land was of small value left a wide margin of turf along the road side.

About the same hour of that same beautiful September morning, at which the reader has had a glimpse of Dr. Lindisfarn, on his way to morning

service at the Cathedral,—a little later perhaps; but even if it had still been *Dane* Burder's time, the service could not be yet over;—an old labourer paused in his loitering walk along the road towards Silverton, to look at two ladies on horseback coming at full gallop across the common, followed at some little distance by a groom.

“Now for a jump!” said the old man as he stood to look; “there ben't another in all the country has such a seat on a horse as my lady have! And Miss Kate she's just such another.”

And as he spoke, the two ladies came lightly over the low rail on to the turf by the road side, the younger of the two giving a playful imitation of a view hallo, as she cleared her fence, in a voice whose silver notes were musical as the tones from a flute.

Lady Farnleigh of Wanstrow Manor, gentle reader, and Miss Kate Lindisfarn, daughter of Oliver Lindisfarn, Esq., of the Chase.

The fence was not much of a jump; and the whole appearance of the ladies betokened that they were accustomed to much severer feats of horsemanship than that. It was a soft morning, and though the Lindisfarn woods above were glistening in the sunshine, and the old castle keep, and the towers of the cathedral at Silverton were clearly defined in the bright air, the mist, as has been said, was still lying in the valley, and

glistening drops of the moisture had gathered on the brims and on the somewhat bedraggled feathers of the ladies' low-crowned beaver hats, and on the curls of hair, which hung in slightly dishevelled disarray around their necks. They bore about them, too, still more decided marks of hard riding. Their habits were splashed with mud up to their shoulders, and the lower parts of them were evidently the worse for the passage of Lindisfarn brook ford. Their whole appearance was such, in short, that had a malicious fairy dropped them just as they were into the midst of the ride in Hyde Park, they would have wished the earth to open and swallow them up. Yet many a fair frequenter of that matchless show of horsewomen, would, more judiciously, have given anything to look exactly, age for age, like either lady. They were both beautiful women, though the elder was the mother of a peer, who had just taken his seat in the House. In fact, the Dowager Lady Farnleigh was only in her forty-fourth year. Her companion was twenty-six years younger. But both were in face and figure eminently beautiful, and did not look less so for the glow which their exercise had called into their cheeks, and the sparkle in their eyes from the excitement of their gallop. Both sate their horses to perfection, as the old man had said; and both were admirably well mounted;—Lady Farnleigh on a magnificent bay, and Kate on

a somewhat smaller and slighter black ;—as indeed they needed to be for the work they had been engaged in. Their horses were splashed from fetlock to shoulder, and from nose to crupper; and the gallop up the rise from the ford, and over the deep turf of the soft common made their flanks heave as their riders pulled up in the road; and the breath from their mobile nostrils was condensed into little clouds just a shade darker than the white mist that lay on the water-meads. But the eyes in their pretty thorough-bred heads were as bright as those of their mistresses; and as they turned their heads and erect ears up the road and down the road, as if inquiring for further orders, they seemed rather anxious to be off again, than distressed by what they had already done.

“Why Kate!” cried Lady Farnleigh, in a clear, ringing, cheery voice, that would have been good to any amount as a draft for sympathy on any one within earshot, “Why Kate, as I am a sinner, if there is not Freddy Falconer coming along the road on his cob, looking for all the world, of course, as if he had been just taken out of the bandbox in which the London tailor had sent him down for the enlightenment of us natives! Shall we run, Kate, like naughty girls as we are;—shall we show our Silverton *arbiter elegantiarum* a clean pair of heels; or boldly stay and abide the ordeal?”

“Oh, I vote for standing our ground,” answered Kate; “I see no reason for running away!” she added laughing, but with a somewhat heightened colour in her cheek.

“To be sure! What is Freddy Falconer to you, or you to Freddy Falconer! Them’s your sentiments, as old Gaffer Miles says, eh Kate? Who’s afraid? I am sure I am not!” replied Lady Farnleigh, looking half jestingly, half observantly, into her god-daughter’s face;—for she stood in that relationship to Miss Lindisfarn.

Kate laughed, and shook her pretty head, putting up a little slender hand in its neatly fitted gauntlet, as she did so, to make a little unavowed attempt at restoring her hair to some small appearance of order.

In another minute the rider, whom Lady Farnleigh had observed in the road, coming up at a walk, reached the spot where the ladies were.

He was a young man of some twenty-seven years of age. It was impossible to deny—even Lady Farnleigh could not have denied—that Nature had done her part to qualify him for becoming the *arbiter elegantiarum*, she had sneeringly called him. He was indeed remarkably handsome; fair in complexion, with perhaps a too delicate and unbronzed pink cheek for a man; plenty of light brown, crisp, curling hair; no

moustache or beard, and closely trimmed whiskers; ('twas forty years ago;) large light blue eyes, a well formed mouth, the lips of which however were rather thin, and lacked a little of that colour in which his cheek was so rich; and a tall well proportioned figure;—a strikingly handsome man unquestionably.

Nor had Fortune been behindhand in contributing her share to the perfect production in question. For Mr. Frederick Falconer was the only son and heir of the wealthy and prosperous banker, the senior partner of the old established and much respected firm of Falconer and Fishbourne of Silverton. And as for Art, her contributions to the joint product had been unstinted, and in her best possible style. Every portion of the costume, appointments, and equipments of Mr. Frederick Falconer and his horse, from the top of the well-brushed beaver to the tip of the well-polished and faultless boot of the biped, and from the artistically groomed tail to the shining curb-chain of the quadruped, were absolutely perfect; and fully justified the anticipatory commendation that Lady Farnleigh had bestowed upon them. And in addition to all this, it may be said, that Falconer was an almost universal favourite in the Silverton society—in the “very best” Silverton society, of course. The young men did not admire him quite so much as the young ladies. But this was natural

enough. Both sexes, however, of the old, professed an equally favourable opinion of him. He was held to be a good son, as attentive to his father's business as could well be expected under the circumstances, a well-conducted and steady young man, and by pretty well all the Silverton matronocracy a decidedly desirable "*parti*."

(How naturally we Anglo-Saxon folks speak French whenever we have anything to say of which we are at all ashamed; or any lie to tell !)

"Good morning, Lady Farnleigh ! Good morning Miss Lindisfarn !" he said, saluting the ladies with easy grace, as he came up to them ; " You are not only riding early this morning, but you have been riding some time earlier ; for I see you have crossed Lindisfarn brook !"

Both ladies gave a nod in return for his salutation, Lady Farnleigh, not a distant or supercilious, but rather a dry one (if a nod can be said to be dry, as I think it may—) and Kate a goodnatured one, accompanied by a goodhumoured smile.

" You have been riding early too, which is paying this misty morning a much higher compliment !" returned Lady Farnleigh, " for you are already returning to Silverton."

" Yes ! I have been to Churton Bassett already this morning. My father wanted a letter taken to

Quorn and Prideaux there before they opened for the day. Some business of the bank."

"Well; our ride is not so near its end as yours. We are going up to the Chase again, as soon as I have visited an old friend of mine in the village here. Will you ride over the common with us? Come up to the Chase; and Miss Imogene shall give you some luncheon. And you may ride over with me back again to Wanstrow in the afternoon, if you like."

And Kate bowed her backing of the invitation, with a smile that made Mr. Frederick feel a strong inclination to accept it; although, in fact, Kate had intended only to be courteous, and by no means wished to be, on this occasion, taken at her word, or rather at her bow and her smile; for she had not spoken.

It was true that Fred had Messrs. Quorn and Prideaux's answer to his father's letter in his pocket; but he had no reason to think that it mattered much whether it reached its destination a few hours sooner or later. And in truth it was the consideration of the nature of the ride proposed to him, rather than any anxiety about the letter, that made him plead the necessity of returning to Silvertown as an excuse for not accepting the proposal.

"Well, good day then! You are a pearl of a messenger! Give my compliments to your father;

and oh! Mr. Falconer! there is a lot of mud in the road by the lock yonder! Take care you do not splash yourself! Good bye!"

He understood the sneer well enough; and would have been riled at it, if Kate had not administered an antidote to the acerbity of her godmother's tongue, by giving him a parting nod and a "good bye, Mr. Falconer," in which there was no acerbity at all.

Nevertheless, as the young man rode off towards the city, and the ladies turned their horses' heads to enter the village of Weston Friary, Kate said, addressing her companion;

"How could you think of inviting him up to the Chase to-day? As if we had not enough to think of, without having strangers on our hands!"

"Don't be a goose, Kate!" answered the elder lady. "Do you think I imagined that there was the slightest chance of Master Freddy consenting to ride over Lindisfarn common with you and me? Catch him at it! But at what time do you think your sister may arrive?"

"We have calculated that she may be at the Chase by two. I wanted to meet her in Silverton, but papa thought it best that we should all receive her together at home. We must take care to be back at the Chase by that time. I would not be out when she comes for the world!"

"Oh! no fear! I've only to say half a dozen

words to old Granny Wilkins, poor thing, in Weston here, and then we'll go up to the Chase best pace. We sha'n't be long, since we have not Master Freddy at our heels."

"Why, what a spite you have, Godmamma, against poor Mr. Falconer! What has he done to offend you?"

"Nothing in the world, my dear! And I have not the slightest idea of being offended with him. It is true I don't like him quite so much as all the Silvertown young ladies do!"

"I don't think you like him at all! Why don't you?" asked Kate with a blunt straightforward frankness that was peculiar to her.

"Well, I don't like him at all, that's the truth! But you know the old rhyme, Kate! 'I do not like you, Dr. Fell!' &c., &c. Upon second thoughts however, I think I *can* tell why I don't like Freddy Falconer. He is a regular....."

"Oh, not a snob, as you said of that superfine Captain Marnisty, the other day. I don't think Mr. Falconer is a snob!"

"No, I was not going to say a snob. Why should you fancy I was?"

"Only because when you called Captain Marnisty so, you said 'a regular snob,' just in the same sort of way."

"Well, this time I am going to say a regular something else. No! it would not be fair—or

true, to say that Fred Falconer is a snob. But I can put what he is into four letters too !”

“Not a fool !” expostulated Kate.

“No, that’s not quite it, either ; though I have known wiser men than Fred. Try again !”

“Dandy, has five letters,” said Kate meditatively.

“Yes, and so has scamp ! and I do not mean to call Mr. Falconer either. No, if I must tell you, it is p—r—i—g. Freddy Falconer is a regular prig ! And I am not fond of prigs. But Heaven help us all ! there are worse things than prigs in the world ; and I have nothing to say against the man. Only,” she added after a pause, “to make a clean breast of it, Kate, I have fancied lately that I have seen symptoms of his Sultanship having taken it into his head to throw the handkerchief in the direction of Lindisfarn Chase.....”

“I am sure he never thought of such a thing !” said Kate, with a little toss and a great blush.

“So much the better ! In that case Freddy and I shall remain very good friends. He may make love to every other girl in the county for aught I care. But if he meddles with my Kate, *gare la marraine* ! that’s all ! Will you come in with me to see old Granny Wilkins, dear ; or sit on your horse till I have done ? I sha’n’t be a minute.”

“No, no ! let me come in with you. Granny Wilkins is an old acquaintance of mine.” So the groom helped both the ladies to dismount at the

door of the cottage: and it was evident from the unsurprised manner in which the paralytic old inhabitant of it received her visitors, that they were neither of them strangers to her.

The business with Dame Wilkins was soon despatched, as Lady Farnleigh had said that it would be. It consisted only of the administration of one or two little articles of creature comfort, a trifle of money, and a few of those kind words, more valuable than any of these, when spoken by the gentle and wealthy to the poor and simple with that tact and heartiness which are both naturally inspired by genuine sympathy, but which are as naturally, and with fatal result, wanting to those charitable ministrations, performed as a matter of duty, according to cut and dry rules, even though those rules shall have been adjusted in accordance with the most approved maxims of modern social science.

The fact is that there is just the difference between the two things, that there is between the workmanship of some old *cinque-cento* artist, and the product of a Birmingham steam factory. There is much in favour of the latter. Millions of the required article are turned out of hand instead of units. There is infinitely less loss of material. The article produced is according to every mechanical test, even better than the handiwork of the old artist. It is more accurate, its rounds are

absolutely round, its angles true angles ; each individual article of the gross turned out per hour is exactly the same as every other, and all are adapted with scientific forethought to the exact requirements they are intended to serve. But the old handicraftsman impressed his individuality on the work of his hands,—put his whole soul into it, as we say, more literally than we often think, as we use the phrase. What is the difference between this old sixteenth century.....anything.....inkstand, lady's needlecase or what not, and the article imitated from it by our mechanical science ? I am not artist enough to say what the difference is ; but I see it and feel it readily enough. And so does everybody else. And the market value of the ancient artist's piece shall be as a thousand to one to that of the modern imitation of it. And I know that this subtle difference, and this superior value is due to that presence of the workman's soul, which the best possible steam-engine, (having up to the date of the latest improvement, *no* soul) cannot impart to its products.

The best possible mechanism, whether applied by dynamic science to the shaping and chasing of metal, or by social science to the cheering of poverty and the relief of suffering, must not be expected to do the work of individually applied sympathy, heart and soul. But modern civilization needs beautiful inkstands in millions ; and the

masses of modern population need ministrations only to be applied by organized social machinery. Very true ! Only do not let us suppose, that we get the same thing, or a thing nearly as precious. Maybe we get the best we can. But the human brain-directed hand must come in contact with the material, to produce the higher order of artistic beauty. And individual human sympathy, unclogged by rules, must bring one human heart into absolute contact with another, before the best kind of "relief" can be attained.

Dame Wilkins, however, was the fortunate possessor of the real artistic article, in the kind visits of Lady Farnleigh. But the few kind words, which were treasured and repeated, and prized, did not take long in saying ; and the two ladies in a very few minutes were mounting their horses again. Miss Lindisfarn was already in the saddle ; and Lady Farnleigh was about to mount, when the groom said in an under voice ; "Please, my Lady, the tobacco !"

"To be sure ! what a brute I am to have forgotten it ! give me the packet, Giles." She took the little parcel Giles produced from his pocket, and returning into the cottage said, "Here, granny ! If it had not been for Giles, I should have forgotten the best of my treat. Here's half a pound of baccy to comfort you as the cold nights come on."

"Oh! my Lady! That *is* the best! You knows how to comfort a poor old body as has lost the use of her precious limbs. Thank you, my Lady, and God bless you!" said the old woman, as a gleam of pleasure came into her watery old eyes at the thought of the gratification contained in that small packet.

"I say, Godmamma dear," said Kate after a pause, as they were riding at a sober pace through the village, "do you think it is right to give the poor people tobacco? I have often heard uncle Theophilus say, that the habit of smoking is, next to drinking, the worst thing for the labouring classes;—that it promotes bad company, encourages idleness, and very often leads to drunkenness."

"Uncle Theophilus may go to Jericho! I am of another parish; and don't like his doctrine! Tell him from me, Kate, the next time he preaches on that text, that the labouring classes are of opinion that there is nothing worse for their superiors than the habit of drinking port wine; that it makes the temper crusty, promotes red noses, and very often leads to the gout!"

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" laughed Kate in silvery notes, that made the little village street musical; "depend upon it, I will give him your message word for word."

And then after a sharp gallop over the common, they crossed the ford again, not without carrying

away with them some additional specimen of the soil of its banks and bottom, and thence made the best of their way, first over the broken open ground which intervened between the brook and the Lindisfarn woods, and then through the leafy lanes which crossed them, gradually reaching the higher ground, till they came out on the carriage road from Silverton to the Chase, a little below the Lodge gates.

Here Lady Farnleigh turned her horse's head to return to Wanstrow by the road through Silverton, leaving Kate to ride up to the house alone.

"Good bye, darling!" she said; I won't come in. I know how anxious you must all be. But remember that I shall be anxious also to hear all about the new sister; and ride over the day after to-morrow at furthest; there's a dear. Love to them all!"

And Kate cantered up the avenue to join the other members of the family, who were not without some little nervous expectation awaiting the arrival of a daughter of the house, whom none of them had seen for the last fifteen years.

CHAPTER III.

THE FAMILY IN THE CLOSE.

LINDISFARN house is a noble old mansion almost entirely of the Elizabethan period, with stately, stiff, and trim gardens behind it, embosomed in woods behind and around them, with larger and more modern gardens on one side of it, and a wide open gravel drive, and a piece of tree-dotted park-like pasture land in front of the house;—beyond which it looks down over the wooded slope descending to the Lindisfarn brook, and across it to the cultivated side of the hill on the other side of the top of which stands Silverton. The city is not seen from the house. But the old castle keep is just visible as an object on the edge of the not distant horizon.

It is so charming an old house, so full of character, so homogeneously expressive in all its parts and all its surroundings, and every detail of it and the scenery around it is so vividly impressed on my remembrance, that it is a great temptation

to try my power of word-painting by attempting a minute description of the place. But conscious of having often "skipped" similar descriptions written by others, I do as I would be done by, and refrain. After all, the associations to be found in each reader's memory and reminiscences have to be called on to supplement the most successful of such descriptions. How can I cause to echo in the memory-chambers of another's brain as they are echoing in mine, the morning concert of the rooks in the humid autumn morning air, or in the dreamy quietude of the sunset hour,—the barking of the dogs, and the cheery ringing tones of old Oliver Lindisfarn's voice, which seemed never to condescend to a lower note than that adapted to a "Yoicks! forward! hark forward!" and which, as it used to echo through the great hall, or make the windows of the wainscoted parlours ring again, seemed to harmonize so perfectly and pleasantly with the other sounds! Why, I swear, that even the cry of the peacock seems melodious as it comes wafted across forty years of memory! And as for Kate's silver-toned laugh on the terrace in front of the house, as she played with old Bayard the great rough mastiff, or enticed her bonny black mare Birdie, to follow her up and down for lumps of sugar purloined out of Imogene's breakfast basin; Ah me! the old Lindisfarn rooks will never hear *that* again! Nor shall I.....that, or

any other like it! And dear old Miss Immy, as she loved to be called, with her little crisp white cap set on the top of her light crisp silver-white curls, three each side of her head, and her round withered red-apple like cheeks and her bolt-upright little figure, and her pit-a-pat high-heeled shoes, and her stiff rustling lavender-coloured silk gown, which seemed to go across the floor when she moved, like some Dutch toy moved by clock-work, and her basket of keys, and her volume of *Clarissa Harlowe*. Accidents, many of these things may seem to be; but they were properties of dear old Miss Immy. For they never changed, neither the snow-white cap nor the lavender-coloured gown, nor the volume of *Clarissa Harlowe*. She really did read it! But she faithfully began it again as soon as she had finished the volume. For sixty years I believe Miss Immy had never been seen without her little basket of keys and her volume of *Clarissa Harlowe*.

I will not, I say, attempt to describe the old place. But I must needs give some account of the inhabitants of it, as they were at the period to which this history refers.

The Lindisfarn property had belonged to the Lindisfarns of Lindisfarn so long, that not only the memory of man but the memory of county historians "ran not to the contrary," as the legal phrase goes. The rental at the period of our

history was a well paid four thousand a year, and the tenantry were as well-to-do and respectable a body as any estate in the county could boast. Oliver Lindisfarn, the son and grandson of other Olivers, and the lord of this eminently "desirable property," was in his sixtieth year at the time here spoken of. He had married early in life a sister of his neighbour, Lord Farnleigh;—for the old lord had lived at Wanstrow, which was now the residence of the dowager his widow; the young lord having taken his young wife to reside on a larger property in a distant county. The present Dowager Lady Farnleigh was therefore the sister-in-law of the lady Mr. Lindisfarn had first married; but not of the mother of the two young ladies, of whom one has already been presented to the reader. They were the offspring of a second marriage. Lady Catherine Lindisfarn had died after a few weeks of marriage, leaving her husband a childless widower. He had remained such about eight years, and had then at the age of forty-three married a Miss Venafray, who after two years of marriage left him a widower for the second time, and the father of two little twin-born girls, Catherine and Margaret. Catherine had been the name of Mr. Lindisfarn's first wife, and Margaret that of his second.

Of course the absence of a male heir was a heavy and bitter disappointment to the twice-

widowed father of two unportioned girls. Mr. Lindisfarn's daughters were entirely so; for on Lady Catherine's death her fortune returned to her family; and Miss Venafray had been dowered by her beauty alone. In another point of view, however, the case of Mr. Lindisfarn was not so hard as that of many another son-less holder of entailed property. For the Lindisfarn estates were entailed only on the male heir of Oliver, and failing an heir of the elder brother, on the male heir of his younger brother, the Rev. Theophilus Lindisfarn. If there were failure of a male heir there also, the daughters of Oliver would become co-heiresses. But Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarn, Canon of Silverton, his brother's junior by only one year, had married Lady Sempronia Balstock, much about the same time that his elder brother had married Lady Catherine Farnleigh; and of this marriage had been born a son, Julian, who was about thirteen years old at the time of the birth of Oliver Lindisfarn's daughters. They were born, therefore, to nothing, save such provision as their father might lay by for them out of his income; and Julian, when his uncle's second wife died a year after giving birth to these portionless girls, became the heir to the estates, barring the unlikely chance of his uncle contracting a third marriage.

Long, however, before the dowerless little twins

were capable of caring for any provision save that needed for the passing hour, their prospects in life became somewhat brightened. When the second Mrs. Lindisfarn died, a sister of hers, a few years her senior, who had been married for several years to a Baron de Renneville, a Frenchman, and who had been Margaret Lindisfarn's godmother, being childless, proposed to adopt her goddaughter. A pressing and most kind proposal to this effect, warmly backed by the Baron himself, held out to his child a prospect which the widowed father did not feel justified in refusing. The De Renneilles were wealthy, and of good standing in the best Parisian society. Madame de Renneville had not abandoned her religion. She remained a Protestant, and there was no objection, therefore, on that score. So the little Margaret, almost before she was out of her nurse's arms, was sent to Paris, to be brought up as the recognized heir to the wealth of the prosperous French financier.

The prize which Fortune had in her lottery for the other twin sister, Catherine, was less brilliant; but, nevertheless, was sufficient to make a very important difference in her position. Lady Farnleigh, the sister-in-law of Mr Lindisfarn's first wife, had become the attached friend of his second;—and the godmother of little Catherine. And much about the same time that Margaret was sent to Paris, it was understood that a sum of six

thousand pounds was destined by Lady Farnleigh as a legacy to her otherwise wholly unprovided for goddaughter.

This was the position of the Lindisfarn family at the period of Mrs. Lindisfarn's death. But events had occurred between that time and the date at which this history opens, which very materially altered the whole state of the case. And in order to explain these, it is necessary to turn our attention away for a few minutes from the family at the Chase, and give it to that of Dr. Lindisfarn, in the Close at Silverton.

The Chapter of Silverton at the remote period of which I write, was not noted for the strictly clerical character of its members. Public opinion did not demand much in this respect in those days. The Right Reverend Father, who had presided for many years over the diocese, was a well-born and courtly prelate far better known in certain distinguished metropolitan circles than at Silverton. He was known to hold very strong opinions on the necessity of filling the ranks of the established church with *gentlemen*. And though I cannot assert that he required candidates for ordination to forward, together with their other papers, an heraldic certificate of the "quarterings" they were entitled to, after the fashion of a noble German chapter, yet it was perfectly well understood that no awkward highlow-shod son of the

soil, however competent to "mouth out Homer's Greek like thunder," would do well to apply to the Bishop of Silverton for ordination.

The Silverton canonries were very good things; and good things of this sort were, it may perhaps be thought, naturally reserved for those whose worship was rather given to the special patron of good things, Mammon, than to any more avowed object of their adoration. But nobody could say that the Silverton Canons were not gentlemen. Nor can it be said that, with the exception of one, or, perhaps, two of the body, whose love for good things went to the extent of hoarding them when they had got them, they were otherwise than well liked by the Silvertonians of all classes; putting out of the question, as of course they *were* out of the question, those few pestilent fellows who sang hymns to hornpipe tunes down in the back slums. They were gentlemen; and the Silverton world said that they spent their revenues as such, which was what the Silverton world considered to be the main point. Only the worst of it was that Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne might have had reason to think that some among them pushed this good quality to excess.

Dr. Lindisfarn, it is fair to state at once, to prevent the reader of these improved days from conceiving an unfounded prejudice against him, was perhaps the most clerical of the body in

question. Not that it is to be understood by this, that any High Churchman or Low Churchman or Broad Churchman of the present day would have deemed poor Dr. Lindisfarn anything like up to the mark of their different requirements and theories. He would have been sorely perplexed to comprehend what anybody was driving at, who should have talked to him of the duty of "earnestness." He found the world a very fairly satisfactory world, as it was, and had never conceived the remotest idea, good easy man, that he was in any wise called on to do anything towards leaving it at all better than he found it. Nevertheless, he was fairly entitled to be considered as the most respectably clerical of his Chapter, because his tastes and pursuits were of a nature that was not in any degree in overt disaccordance with the clerical character, even according to our modern conception of it. Whereas the same could hardly be said of the majority of his fellow Canons. One was a very notorious joker of jokes,—of very good jokes too occasionally, for he was a man of real wit. (N.B. Though a very clever fellow in his way, he was *not* capable of writing some of the best articles in the *Edinburgh Review*.) But nothing in the shape of a joke came amiss to him, be the subject or tendency of it what it might. He preferred good society; but the *profanum vulgus* was not the portion of the vulgar, which he

most hated and kept at a distance. Another was known to be an accomplished musical critic ; but was thought to prefer Mozart and Cimarosa to Boyce and Purcell, and to have a not uninfluential voice in the counsels of the lessee of His Majesty's Theatre in the Haymarket. Another had been seen on more than one occasion to wave above his head a hat that looked very like a full-blown shovel in the excitement of a hardly contested race at Newmarket. A fourth was universally allowed to be one of the best whist-players in England, and was thought to be in no danger of losing his skill for want of practice, while a fifth was believed to be a far deeper student of the mysteries of the stock-exchange than of any other sort of lore.

Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarn meddled with none of these anti-clerical pursuits. His heart, as well as his corporeal presence, was in Silverton Close, and Silverton Cathedral Church. But his love for the Church fixed itself rather on the material structures which are as the outward and visible signs of its inward and spiritual existence, than on the abstract ideas of a church invisible. He was a man of considerable learning and of yet greater zeal for antiquarian and especially ecclesiological pursuits. It is in the nature and destiny of hobbies to be hard ridden. This was Dr. Lindisfarn's hobby ; and he did ride it very hard. He was far from a

valueless man, as a member of the Silverton Chapter. The Dean was not untinctured with similar tastes ; and with his assistance and support Dr. Lindisfarn had accomplished much for the restoration and repair of Silverton cathedral, at a time when such things were less thought of than they are in these days. He had fought many a hard fight in the Chapter with his brother dignitaries, who fain would have expended no shilling of the church revenues for such a purpose ; and not content with the niggard grants which it had been possible to induce that body to allocate for the purpose, had spent much of his own money on his beloved church. In fact it was very well known, that the whole of a considerable sum which he had received from an unexpected legacy by a relative of Lady Sempronia, had gone towards the new panelled ceiling in painted coffer-work of the transept of the cathedral. And indeed it was whispered at Silverton tea tables that old Mr. Falconer had been heard to say, with a mysterious nod of his head, that the legacy in question had by no means covered all that the Canon had made himself liable for.

Mr. Falconer no doubt knew what he was talking about, for besides being Dr. Lindisfarn's banker, he was a brother Archæologist. The votaries of that seducing pursuit were far less numerous in those days than in our own ; and the

erudite Canon of Silvertown was fortunate in finding a fellow labourer and supporter where, it might have been supposed, little likely to meet with it, in the leading banker of the little city. The Dean was the only member of the Chapter, besides Dr. Lindisfarn, who cared for such pursuits. But a few recruits were found among the clergy and gentry of the county; and the banker and the Canon together had succeeded in getting up a little county Archæological society and publishing club.

Dr. Lindisfarn's tastes and pursuits therefore may fairly be said to have been clerical, or at least not anti-clerical, as well as gentlemanlike. Nevertheless, the Lady Sempronia his wife did not look on them with an altogether favourable eye. And perhaps she can hardly be blamed for her feeling on the subject. The Canon's hobby was a very expensive one. The cost of it indeed would have done far more than amply maintain the handsome pair of carriage horses, which Lady Sempronia hopelessly sighed for, and which would have spared her the bitter mortification of going to visit the county members' wives, or Lady Farnleigh at Wanstrow, in a hybrid sort of conveyance drawn by one stout clumsy horse in the shafts, whereas Mrs. Dean drove a handsome pair of greys. Many other of the small troubles and mortifications, which helped to make Lady Sempronia a querulous

and disappointed woman, were traceable, and were very accurately as well as very frequently traced by her, to the same source. Upon the whole therefore, it was hardly to be wondered at that the poor lady should abhor all Archæology in general, and the Silverton society and printing club in particular; and that she should have regarded the discovery of a whitewash-covered moulding or half-defaced inscription as a bitter misfortune, boding evil to the comforts of her hearth and home!

Lady Sempronia's soul was moreover daily vexed by another peculiarity of her husband's idiosyncrasy, which she put down,—with scarcely sufficient warrant perhaps from the principles of psychological science,—all to the account of the detested Archæology. Dr. Lindisfarn was afflicted by habitual absence of mind to a degree which occasionally exposed him and those connected with him to considerable inconvenience. His wife held that the evil was occasioned wholly by his continual meditations on his favourite pursuit when his wits should have been occupied with other matters. But the evil had doubtless a deeper root. It is an infirmity generally regarded with a compassionate smile by those who are witnesses of its manifestations. But to a narrow little mind, soured and irritated by other annoyances, and at best placing its highest conception of human perfection in the due and accurate perform-

ance of the thousand little duties and proprieties of everyday life in proper manner, place, and time, the eccentricities of a thoroughly absent man were sources of anger and exacerbation, that contributed far more to make the life of the lady who felt them unhappy, than they did to affect in any way the placid object of them. Upon one occasion, for instance, her indignation knew no bounds, when having with some difficulty driven the Canon from his study upstairs to dress for a dinner party, to which they were engaged, the Doctor, on finding himself in his bed-room, had forgotten all about the business in hand, and had quietly undressed himself and gone to bed, where he was found fast asleep, shortly afterwards, by the servant sent to look after him. Of course all Silverton soon knew the story, and the ill-used lady poured her lamentations into the ears of her special friends. But Lady Sempronia was not popular at Silverton, even among her special friends; and it may be feared that the Silverton public accorded her on this, as well as on other occasions, less of their sympathy than her sorrows deserved.

For in truth the poor lady had been sorely tried, and her life embittered by far more serious sorrow and severer trouble;—a sorrow that had left its mark indelibly on her heart, and which produced in her mind another source of half latent irritation against her husband because he did not seem to

be equally affected by it; yet it was the greatest common misfortune a man and wife can have to share;—the loss of an only child. And Lady Sempronia wronged her husband in supposing that he did not feel, or rather had not felt, the blow acutely. But some natures are so constituted, that sorrow sinks into them, as water into a spongy cloth; while from others it as naturally runs off, as from a waterproof surface. And it would be a mistake to pronounce on this ground alone that either of these natures is necessarily superior to the other. And then again in this matter the Doctor no doubt owed much to his hobby. Serious hard work, it has been said, is the most efficacious alleviation for sorrow. And the next best probably is hard riding on a favourite hobby.

But poor Lady Sempronia had no help in bearing her grief from either one of these; and it was a very heavy burthen to bear.

There were circumstances, that made it a very special and exceptionally sore sorrow to the bereaved parents; and these circumstances, must be as briefly as may be related.

The two brothers, Oliver and Theophilus Lindisfarn, had married, as has been said, nearly about the same time. The marriage of the elder brother remained childless. But to the younger, a son, Julian, was born about (I think, in) the year 1793. Of course the childless wife of the squire was a

little envious, and the happy wife of the churchman a little exultant,—pardonable in either case. As the years slipped away, the probability that the little Julian would be the heir to the Lindisfarn property grew greater. When, he being at the time about five years old, his aunt the squire's wife, died, his chance was somewhat diminished, for there was the probability that his uncle would marry again. He was about thirteen years old when that event did happen. But when, some two years later, his uncle's second wife died, leaving him, as the reader knows, only two twin daughters, the probability that Julian must be the heir had become all but a certainty.

Under these circumstances, with a silly, adoring, fine lady mother, and an indulgent, placid, absent, archæological father, it is perhaps not surprising that Julian, kept at home in compliance with his mother's urgent desire, to "read" with a tutor at Silverton, went—as the common saying expressively phrases it—to the bad. Of course that downward journey—"to the bad,"—took some little time in making. And Julian was just over twenty-one when he reached *the bad* altogether. There were cavalry barracks at Silverton; and there was always a cavalry regiment stationed there. The younger of the officers were naturally enough among the most habitual associates of the young heir of Lindisfarn. And though it may

very well be, that no one of those young men went altogether to the bad himself, yet there can be little doubt that they helped to forward Julian on his road thither.

His most intimate friend and associate, however, at that time,—when he was about from twenty to one-and-twenty, that is to say,—was Frederick Falconer. And all those—his parents among the rest,—who had seen with some alarm, that Julian was becoming very “wild,” considered that his intimacy with so steady and well-conducted a young man as the banker’s son was, at all events, a good sign. The careful old banker, on the other hand, was by no means equally well pleased with the intimacy between the two young men. It was difficult, however, to interfere to put a stop to it, without taking unpleasantly strong measures, which would have caused much scandal, and heartburning and enmity, in the small social circle of a little country town. Old Mr. Falconer had, moreover, much confidence in the steadiness and good principles of his son. Some of the young cavalry officers, whose society the two Silverton youths frequented, were men of large means; and stories were rife in Silverton of orgies and escapades which, in varied ways, involved expenditure on no inconsiderable scale. There were excursions to distant race-courses; and more uncertain and cautiously whispered rumours of nights spent in

rooms of the barracks, when suppers and champagne, in whatever abundance, were the least dangerous and objectionable portion of the night's amusement. Frederick Falconer, however, never exceeded his liberal, but not unreasonably large allowance, and never appeared in want of money; and the old banker considered, that to be out of debt was to be out of danger; and that a young man who lived strictly within his means, and always made his quarter's allowance supply his quarterly expenditure, could not be going far wrong. There were not wanting in Silverton, however, one or two shrewd old fellows, who observed to one another, that there was such a thing as being too *steady*:—that young as Freddy Falconer was,—three or four years Julian's junior,—it was on the cards that young Lindisfarn might get more harm from young Falconer, than the reverse. But of course the prudent old gentlemen, whose observation suggested to them such remarks, were too prudent to make them out loud.

Certain it was, that young Lindisfarn did not imitate his steady friend's prudence in the matter of his expenses. Julian, on the contrary, always exceeded his more than liberal allowance, and was always importuning his father for money. And the easy, absent old Canon, careless in money matters, and culpably extravagant on his own account, did, without much resistance, and without

any such inquiries as he ought in common prudence to have made, supply his son with sums, which at the end of the year very seriously increased the balance against him in Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne's books. And then "my brother Noll" had to be applied to for assistance. And the jolly old squire, after roaring his indignation in the bank parlour, in tones which made every pane in the windows vibrate, and caused Mr. Fishbourne to shake in unison with them in his shoes, and Mr. Falconer to jump from his chair with the momentary idea of clapping his hand on Mr. Lindisfarn's mouth, before it had made known the business in hand to half Silverton,—lent the money out of funds laid aside for the provision of his daughters,—and forgot the transaction before the end of the week.

And then it was the same thing all over again! or rather a similar thing on a much extended scale. "*Major rerum nascitur ordo!*" as is ever the case in such careers as Julian Lindisfarn was running; for the march to the devil always has to be played with a rapidly *crescendo* movement.

And then.....and then,—to make a very sad story as short an one as may be,—one fine morning in the year 1814 Julian Lindisfarn was missing from his father's house, and the bed in which he was supposed to have slept was found not to have been occupied. And it did come to the ears of

some of those prudent old observers of their neighbours' affairs, of whom I spoke before, that Mr. Thorburn the Minor Canon had told Peter Glenny the organist, that returning home through the Close late that night, he had seen young Falconer in close confabulation with Julian in the shade of the wall of his father's house just under the young man's bedroom window. Mr. Frederick however was known by his family to have gone to bed in his own room at a much earlier hour; and everybody in Silverton knew that poor Ned Thorburn, though always perfectly good for a catch or a glee till any hour you pleased in the morning, was apt to be good for little else after twelve o'clock at night; and certainly *not* good as a witness to the identity of a person seen in dark shadow by him, when coming home from a remarkably pleasant meeting of good fellows. And when the facts which the next day brought to light, were known in Silverton, neither Thorburn nor Glenny, nor any of those few persons whose ears the report of the Minor Canon's vision had reached, cared to recur to the circumstance.

The terrible facts were shortly these.

The London Mail which reached Silverton on the very morning on which Julian disappeared thence, brought letters to Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne, which made it evident that the signature of their firm had been forged to drafts

for very heavy amounts on their London correspondents. The execution of the forgery was so admirable, that it was no wonder the fraud had been successful. It is not necessary to detail the circumstances, which, even if Julian's flight had not immediately pointed him out as the criminal, abundantly sufficed to bring the guilt home to him. It is sufficient to state that there was no possibility of doubt upon the subject. But it was at the time thought very extraordinary, even supposing that Julian Lindisfarn was gifted with that faculty of imitation, which might have enabled him to counterfeit so successfully the signature of the Silverton firm, that he should have possessed not only such a general acquaintance with the nature of banking business, as should have taught him how to perpetrate the fraud he contemplated, but such a knowledge of the relations between Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne and the London house as must have guided him in his operations, and above all, the information, which it seemed impossible to doubt that he must have possessed, of the exact time when the course of business communication between the Silverton bankers and their London correspondents must bring the fraud to detection. It was certainly within the limits of possibility that Julian's flight was accidentally well timed; but it appeared hardly credible that such was the case.

It was a black day in Silverton—that which brought this sad catastrophe to light; for old Dr. Lindisfarn, despite his faults and eccentricities, was a popular man in Silverton, and the old Squire at the Chase was more than popular,—he was exceedingly beloved not only in Silverton, but throughout the county. The poor sorely-stricken mother too, though Lady Sempronia was not much liked, could not but be deeply pitied on this sad occasion.

It was indeed a heavy blow on all on whom any part of the reflected disgrace fell. And the partner of the London house came down to Silverton; and there were long mysterious sittings with lawyers in the back parlour, at Falconer and Fishbourne's; and the down-stricken father, with bowed white head, had to be there: and the hearty old squire, of whom men remarked that he looked suddenly ten years older, had to be there. And it was said that the London firm behaved forbearingly and well; and that the Silverton banker had behaved equally well;—and though nobody knew what arrangements had been come to respecting the loss of the money, it was known that there would be no prosecution, and that the lamentable facts would be hushed up, as far as possible.

Before long it became known too, that the miserable young man, who had caused all this

wide-spreading sorrow and suffering, had succeeded in making good his escape to the opposite coast of France, in a fishing-vessel belonging to the small fishing-town at the mouth of the estuary of the Sill, about five or six miles from Silverton. Under the miserable circumstances of the case, it was a relief to his family to know that he was out of the country. For those were days in which death was the penalty of forgery, and it was one of the crimes to which it was deemed necessary to show no mercy.

A little later, news reached Silverton, that the lost one had left France for America: and it was known that the heir to the respected old name and fine estate of Lindisfarn, was an exiled wanderer, none knew where, in the New World. For if Julian had never scrupled before his fall to importune his father for money, shame, or some other feeling, prevented him from ever making any application to him afterwards. Had it been possible to obtain such information as might have made it practicable to communicate with him, he would not have been left without the means of support. But from the day of his escape no word came from him; nor beyond the fact of his landing in America, could any trace of him be discovered.

And so the little girl at Lindisfarn Chase, Julian's cousin Kate, then between eight and nine

years old, had to be taught that she must forget all about Cousin Julian, and name his name no more. To the child this was of course not difficult. The Silverton public also, when they had had their talk;—when some had declared that they never could have believed such a thing possible, while others less loudly and more pertinaciously asserted that they had all along foreseen that Julian Lindisfarn's career must needs lead to some such catastrophe;—and when Mr. Frederick Falconer had expressed to a sufficient number of persons the shock and astonishment which this unhappy business had been to him: had admitted that he knew poor Julian to be more dissipated than he could have wished, but had always deemed him the soul of honour and integrity, and had sufficiently often "prayed God, that it might be a warning to him for life of the necessity of care in the choice of associates,"—then Julian Lindisfarn was forgotten in Silverton, and his place knew him no more.

Of course it was not so up at the Chase; and still less in the now still and quiet old house in the Close. But, save when the incorrigible Canon would now and then throw poor Lady Sempronia into a fit of hysterics, which sent her to bed for eight and forty hours, by speaking of his son in total oblivion of all the misery which had fallen on him, his name was never heard.

There was one other house, not in but near Silverton, where the fugitive was not forgotten nor the sound of his name unheard. There was another chapter in the little edifying story of Julian Lindisfarn's Silverton life, of which very little was known at that time to his friends or to any one in Silverton; and which may here be touched on as lightly, and got over as quickly as possible; though subsequent events make it absolutely necessary to the understanding of the sequel of the history to give a succinct statement of the facts.

Stretching along the coast and far into the interior of the county, there was a very extensive district of wild moorland, which ran up to within about ten miles from Silverton. Sill Moor, as this tract of land is called, was—and is still in a smaller degree,—a peculiar district in many respects; and the few small villages, which are scattered at great distances from each other over its wide surface, are inhabited, or were so forty years ago, by a peculiarly and singularly wild population. In one of those moor villages, about fifteen miles from Silverton, which it will be necessary hereafter to speak of more at length, there was a somewhat better house than most of the others around it. In that house there lived an old widowed man, whose name was Jared Mallory, and who was, and for many years had

been, the clerk of the neighbouring ancient church, which was the parish church of an immense district of moorland. The village was called Chewton-in-the-Moor; and the living was held by Dr. Lindisfarn with his Canonry. And in Jared Mallory's lone house lived with him Barbara Mallory his daughter. And there was no girl in Silverton, or in all the country side, so beautiful as Barbara Mallory, the wild moor-flower. And on that fatal morning of Julian's flight, he did not make straight for the fishing village on the coast at which he embarked; but went round by Chewton-in-the-Moor. And there in the grey moor mist, a little before the dawn, under the shelter of one of the huge grey boulder-stones that stud the moor, there was one of those partings that leave a scar upon the heart which no after time can heal. And beautiful Barbara Mallory, as she clung half frantically with one arm to the man, whom the fear at his heels was compelling to tear himself away from her, pressed a child six months old to her breast with the other. But though she was a mother the villagers still called her Bab Mallory. And the desolation in that lone moorland house was even worse than the desolation in the childless house in the Close.

No more was heard in Silverton of Julian Lindisfarn for three years after the date of his flight. Then came a report of his death, vague and un-

accompanied by any particulars; but referring to persons and places, which enabled an agent sent out to America by his family, to ascertain the following facts. After having been about a twelve-month in the United States, he passed into Canada, and there, it appeared, became associated with a small band of independent adventurers, some twenty in number, bound on a journey into the fur regions of the far north-west. The party made, it seemed, one tolerably fortunate journey, and returned for a second venture in the following year. But having been surprised one night in their camp, on the further side of the Rocky Mountains, by a small band of marauding Indians, not much exceeding their own in number, they had had to engage in a desperate struggle in which several of both parties were slain. Among these was Julian Lindisfarn. Of course as large material interests depended on the fact of his death, it was desirable that the evidence of it should be satisfactory. And that which the agent, who had been sent to America for the purpose, was enabled to obtain, was perfectly so. He had spoken with, and brought back with him the authenticated testimony of three survivors of the fray with the Indians, who had seen him slain by them.

These facts became known to his family in 1817. The unfortunate young man must have been about four-and-twenty at the time of his death. This

was the event that so materially changed, as has been remarked, the state of things at Lindisfarn Chase. Mr. Oliver Lindisfarn's twin daughters became the co-heiresses of Lindisfarn.

It cannot be supposed that under the circumstances, Julian Lindisfarn's death should have been felt to be otherwise than a fortunate event by most of the members of his family. The Silverton public naturally felt, and said, that it was the best thing that could have happened in every point of view. Some additional tears wetted poor Lady Sempronia's pillow. But it was in the lone house in the moor, that Julian Lindisfarn's death caused the sharpest pang.

END OF PART I.

Part Second.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAMILY AT THE CHASE.

IN consequence of the circumstances of the family history narrated in the preceding chapter, Margaret Lindisfarn was about to return to the home of her ancestors in the recognised position of co-heiress to the family estates,—a sufficiently brilliant destiny, considering that the property was a good and well paid four thousand a year, unencumbered by mortgage, debt, or other claims of any sort. Had those circumstances not occurred,—had Julian Lindisfarn been still living,—Margaret's position, instead of being a brighter one than that of her sister, as it had appeared to be at the time when she had been adopted by the De Renneville, and Kate had only her godmother's six thousand pounds to look to, would have now been a far less splendid one. For shortly before the time at which she was returning from Paris to Silverton,

all the magnificent De Renneville prospects had suddenly made themselves wings and flown away.

The large fortune of the Baron de Renneville had been, like that of many another Frenchman bearing a name indicative of former territorial greatness, entirely a financial and not a territorial one. And that incapacity for leaving well alone, which is generated by the habitual excitement of a life spent in speculation, and which has wrecked so many a colossal fabric of commercial greatness, was fatal to that of M. de Renneville. A series of unfortunate operations on the Paris *Bourse* had ended by leaving him an utterly ruined man. And there was an end of all expectations from Margaret's Parisian relatives.

Of course the shock of this calamity was very differently felt from what it would have been, had it occurred during the lifetime of Julian Lindisfarn. It was very materially modified to the young lady herself, and doubtless also to the kind relatives who had stood in the position of parents to her from her infancy, by the knowledge that there was a very substantial English inheritance to fall back on, now that the more splendid but less secure French visions had faded away. Nevertheless, the calamity had been felt very distinctly to *be* a calamity by Margaret. In the first place, she was, of course, laudably grieved to be obliged to part with those who had been as parents to her. In

the next place, she very naturally looked forward with anything but pleasure to a migration from Paris to Silvertown, and from the home of an adoptive father and mother, whom she knew, to that of a real father of whom she knew nothing. And in the third place, she estimated with very practical accuracy the difference between an heiress-ship to some six or seven thousand a year, and an heiress-ship to two thousand only. For somehow or other it happens, that this is a point on which the most beautifully *candide* French girls are generally found to possess a singularly sound and business-like knowledge. We are all aware how cautiously and scrupulously the French system of educating *demoiselles comme il faut*, labours to fence in the snow-like mental purity of its pupils from all such contact or acquaintance with the world as might involve the slightest risk of producing a thought or a sentiment which might by possibility lead to something calculated to blemish the perfection of that *ingénuité*, which is so eloquently expressed by every well-schooled feature of these carefully trained and jealously guarded maidens. Nevertheless, a due appreciation of the intimate connexion between cash and social position is not among the tabooed subjects of any French female schoolroom, whether it be under the paternal roof or that of some *Sacré Cœur*, or other such first-rate conventual establishment.

For various reasons, therefore, it was a black day for poor Margaret when she had to leave her Parisian home for an exile *au fond du province*, as she expressed it, in foggy England. "At the bottom of the province," Silvertown certainly was, if the top of it is to be supposed to be the part nearest London. But the Silvertownians had no notion that the "sun yoked his horses so far from" their western city as to justify the sort of idea which Margaret had formed to herself of its remoteness. And least of all had the warm hearts who on that bright September afternoon were expecting the arrival of the recovered daughter of the house at Lindisfarn Chase, the remotest idea that the home to which they were eager to welcome her, was other than on the whole about the happiest and most highly favoured spot of earth's surface.

Kate was, as Lady Farnleigh had promised her she should be, in very good time to join the assembled members of the family before the hour at which Margaret was expected. They were all in the long low drawing-room, lined with white panelling somewhat yellow with years, and gilt mouldings, the four windows of which looked out on the terrace in front of the house. It was very evident at a glance, that something out of the ordinary routine of the family life was about to take place. None of those there assembled would

have been in the room at that hour in the ordinary course of things. And there was an unmistakable air of expectancy, and even of a certain degree of nervousness about them all. The old squire had caused an immense fire to be made in the ample grate; and was very evidently suffering from the effects of it. It was a beautifully warm afternoon,—but the Squire had an idea that his daughter was coming from a southern clime where it was always very hot,—and besides, the making of a big fire seemed to his imagination to be in some sort symbolical of welcome. He was walking up and down the long room, looking out of the windows, as he passed them, wiping his massive broad forehead and florid face with his silk handkerchief, and consulting his watch every two minutes. He was dressed in a blue coat with metal buttons, yellow kerseymere waistcoat, drab breeches, top boots, and a white neckcloth. His head was bald in front, and the long locks of silver hair hung over his coat collar behind. It is worth while to specify these particulars of his toilette, for he never appeared otherwise before dinner.

“I am glad you are come, Kate; I began to think you would have been late! And I should not have been pleased at that. I suppose her ladyship would not come in to-day?”

“No. She thought she had better not to-day;

I took good care about the time. It's not near two yet."

"It wants thirteen minutes," said the Squire, again looking at his watch, "she can hardly be here before two. Go and listen if you can hear wheels, Mat; you have an ear like a hare!"

The "Mat" thus addressed was to every other human being in Sillshire, from the Earl of Silverton at Sillhead Park to the hostlers at the Lindisfarn Arms, *Mr.* Mat. It would have altogether discomposed him to address him as Mr. Matthew Lindisfarn; but he would not have liked anybody save the Squire to call him plain "Mat." He was Mr. Mat; and only recognised himself under that name and title. Mr. Mat was a second cousin of the Squire; and had been received into the house by the Squire's father, when he had been left an orphan at twelve years old, wholly unprovided for. Since that time he had lived, boy and man, at Lindisfarn Chase; and was considered by himself and by everybody else, as much and as inseparably a part of the place as the old elms and the rooks in them. He was about ten years the Squire's junior, that is to say he was about fifty at the time of which I am speaking. Mr. Mat looked at from one point of view, was a very good-for-nothing sort of fellow; but looked at from another, he was good for a great many things, and by no means valueless in his place in the world. He was essentially

good-for-nothing at the prime and generally absolutely paramount business of earning his own living. If kind fate had not popped him into the special niche which suited him so well, he must have starved or lived in the poor-house. He was perfectly well fitted, as far as knowledge went, to be a game-keeper, and a first-rate one. But he never would have kept to his duties. The very fact that they *were* his duties, and the means of earning his bread, would have made them distasteful to him. Not that Mr. Mat was a lazy, or in some sort even an idle man. He was capable of great exertion upon occasions. But then the occasions must be irregular ones. His good qualities again were many. He was the best farrier and veterinary surgeon in the country side, though totally without any science on the subject. He had a fine bass voice, a good ear, and sang a good song, or took a part in a glee in a first-rate style. He was a main support accordingly of the Silver-ton Glee-club, of which the Rev. Minor Canon Thorburn was president. But unlike that reverend votary of Apollo, Mr. Mat, though he liked his glass, was as sober as a judge. Mr. Mat, though perfectly able to speak quite correct and unprovincial English, when he saw fit to do so, was apt to affect the Sillshire dialect, to a certain degree; and if there chanced to be any person present whom Mr. Mat suspected of finery or London-bred airs, he was

sure to infuse a double dose of his beloved provincial Doric into his speech. He had a special grudge against any Sillshire man whom he suspected of being ashamed of his own country dialect. And Freddy Falconer was the object of his strong dislike mainly on this ground ; and the butt of many a shaft from Mr. Mat purposely aimed at this weakness. Often and often when Mr. Fred was doing the superfine, especially before ladies or Londoners, Mr. Mat would come across him with a " We Zillshire volk, muster Vreddy ! " to that elegant young gentlemen's intense disgust. There was accordingly but little love lost between him and Mr. Mat. And upon one occasion Freddy had attempted to come over Mr. Mat by doing the distant and dignified, and calling him Mr. Matthew Lindisfarn, but he brought down upon himself such a roasting on every occasion when he and Mr. Mat met for the next month afterwards, that he was fain not to repeat the offence. Kate, who was a prime favourite with Mr. Mat, and who could hardly do wrong in his eyes, had once ventured to remonstrate with him on these provincial proclivities, upon which he had at once avowed and justified his partiality.

"To think," he said, "of a Lindisfarn lass"—(he always spoke of the young ladies of the family, whether of the present or of former generations, as Lindisfarn lasses ;)—"to think of a Lindisfarn

lass having no ear vor Zillshire! Vor my part, I zem to taste all the pleasant time I've known, Zillshire man and boy for vivty years, in the zound of it, and I du love it. I zem it's so homely and friendly-like. And, Miss Kate, yew du love it yourself, yew don't talk like their vulgar London minced-up gibberish."

Mr. Mat in appearance was a great contrast to the Squire. He was a shorter and smaller man, though by no means undersized. The Squire was six feet one, and broad in proportion. Mr. Mat's head was as black as the Squire's was white, and whereas the latter allowed his silver locks to fall almost on his shoulders, Mr. Mat cropped his coal-black hair so short that it stood up bristling like a scrubbing-brush. He had a specially bright black eye under a large and bushy black eyebrow; a remarkably brilliant set of regular teeth; and would probably have been a decidedly good-looking man, if he had not been deeply marked with the small-pox. As it was, it must be admitted that Mr. Mat was far from good-looking. Yet there was a mingled shrewdness and kindly good-humour in his face that made it decidedly an agreeable one to those who knew him; and few ever found Mr. Mat's ugliness repulsive after a week's acquaintance. His dress, like that of the Squire, never varied. Before dinner he always wore a green coat with metal buttons, bearing on

them a fox's head, or some such adornment, a scarlet cloth waistcoat, a coloured neckerchief, drab breeches, and long buff leather gaiters. At dinner Mr. Mat always appeared in black coat and trousers, white waistcoat and neck-cloth ; and, curiously enough,—unless Fred Falconer led him specially into temptation,—with perfectly correct and unprovincial English.

There was one other member of the family party present, who, though the reader has already heard of her, merits being presented to him a little more formally. This was Miss Imogene Lindisfarn. She was to a yet greater degree than Mr. Mat, an inseparable part and parcel of the Lindisfarn establishment. She was at the time in question in her seventy-eighth year, and was the Squire's aunt. As long as he could recollect,—and much longer therefore than any body else about the place, except old Brian Wyvill, the keeper, a brother of the verger at the Cathedral could recollect—Miss Imogene had kept the keys, made the tea for breakfast, and superintended the female part of the establishment. She was rather short, and still hale, active, and as upright as a ramrod. She always wore a rich lavender-coloured silk dress, which as she walked rustled an accompaniment to the pit-a-pat of her high-heeled shoes. A spotless white crape cap, and equally spotless cambric handkerchief, pinned cornerwise over her

shoulders, completed her attire. A very slight touch of palsy gave a little vibratory motion to her head, which seemed, when she was laying down the law, as on domestic matters she was rather apt to do, to impart a sort of defiant expression to her bearing. She never appeared without a little basket full of keys in her hand, and the perpetual and never-changed volume of Clarissa Harlow, already mentioned. She was the only member of the family who addressed the Squire as "Mr. Lindisfarn." Mr. Mat always called him "Squire;" and Kate, somewhat irreverently, but to her father's great delight, was wont to call him "Noll." As for Miss Imogene, she had never been called anything but "Miss Immy" by any human being for the last sixty years.

Miss Immy had cake and wine, and a most delicately cut plate of sandwiches, on a tray near at hand, prepared ready to be administered to the traveller on the instant of her arrival. She had also a reserve of tea and exquisite Sillshire cream, in case that kind of refreshment should be preferred; and she had thrice in the last quarter of an hour, ascertained by personal inspection that the kettle was boiling. Miss Immy had meditated much on the question what kind of refecton would probably be most in accordance with the habits of the Parisian-bred stranger; and she had brought all that she could remember to have ever

heard on the subject of French modes of life to bear on the subject. But *soupe maigre* and frogs were the only things that had presented themselves to her mind as adapted by any special propriety for the occasion and as both these were for different reasons out of her reach, she had been forced to fall back on English ideas. But she was not without uncomfortable misgivings that very possibly the foreign-bred young lady might have requirements of some wholly unexpected and unimagined kind.

It was evident, indeed, that they were all a little nervous in their different ways; and very naturally so. Mr. Mat was least troubled by any feeling of the kind; being saved from it by the entirety of his conviction that no human being could do otherwise than better their condition, and increase their happiness, by coming from any other part of the world to Sillshire.

At length Mr. Mat cried, "Hark! There is the carriage! Yes, there it is. They've just passed the Lodge." And all of them hurried out to the porch in the centre of the terrace in front of the house, where they were joined by three or four fine dogs, all proving their participation in the excitement of the moment by barking vociferously. Old Brian Wyvill, the octogenarian keeper, came hobbling up after them. Mr. Banting, the old butler, followed by a couple of rustics still struggling with the

scarcely completed operation of getting their arms into their old fashioned liveries, came running out at the door. Coachman and groom had gone with the carriage to meet Miss Margaret at Silverton, and were now coming up the drive from the Lodge. The female portion of the establishment had assembled just inside the hall-door, grouping themselves in attitudes which suggested a strong contest in their minds between curiosity and fear, and readiness to take to flight at the shortest notice, on the first appearance of danger.

Crunch went the gravel! Pit-a-pat went most of the hearts there at a somewhat accelerated pace! The dogs barked more furiously than ever. The rooks began flying in circles around their ancient city up in the elm-clump on the left side of the house, and holding a very tumultuous meeting to inquire into the nature of the unusual circumstances taking place beneath them. The Squire hallooed to the dogs to be quiet, in a great mellow, musical voice, producing a larger volume of sound than all the rest of the noises put together. The peacocks on the wall of the garden behind the elm-clump, stimulated by emulation, screamed their utmost. And in the midst of all this uproar Thomas Tibbs the coachman pulled up his horses exactly at the door, with a profound consciousness that Paris could do no better in *that* department at all events.

CHAPTER V.

MARGARET'S FIRST DAY AT HOME.

IN the next instant half-a-dozen eager hands had pulled open the carriage door; and an exceedingly elegant and admirably dressed figure sprang from it, and with one bound, as it seemed, executed with such marvellous skill that the process involved no awkward movement, and no derangement of the elegant costume, threw itself on its knees at the feet of the astonished Squire.

"*Mon père !*" cried Miss Margaret, in an accent so admirably fitted to the occasion that it seemed to include an exhaustive exposition of all the sentiments that a *jeune personne bien élevée* might, could, should, would, and ought to feel on returning after long absence to the parental roof.

Her attitude was admirable. The heavy folds of her rich silk dress fell down behind, sloping out on the stone step as artistically as if they had been arranged by skilful hands after her position had been assumed. Her clasped hands were

raised towards the Squire's face with an expression that would have arrested the fall of the axe in the hands of an executioner. And her upturned head showed to all present a very beautiful face; in which the most striking feature, as it was then seen, was a magnificent pair of large, dark, liquid eyes.

"My dear child!" cried the Squire in a stentorian voice, that made the fair girl at his feet start just a little,—(but she recovered herself instantly)—"My dear child! Glad to see thee! Welcome to Lindisfarn. Welcome home, lass!" he continued, evidently desirous of getting her up if possible, but much puzzled about the proper way of handling her, if indeed there were any proper way.

"*Mon père!*" reiterated his daughter with a yet more heart-rendingly filial intonation on the word.

Old Brian Wyvill was affected by it, (like the audience recorded as having been melted to tears by a great tragedian's pronunciation of the word "Mesopotamia,") and drew the back of his rough hand across his eyes. The lady's-maid whispered to the housekeeper that it was "beautiful!" But Miss Immy, greatly startled, trotted up to the still kneeling young lady, with that peculiar little short-stepping amble of hers, holding a bottle of salts in her tremulous hand, which she poked under Margaret's nose, saying as she did so, "Poor thing, the journey! It has been too much for her!"

Margaret winked and caught her breath, and the tears came into her fine eyes. Human nature could not have done less, with Miss Immy's salts under her nose; but she did not belie her training, and showed herself equal to the occasion.

"*De grâce, madame!*" she said, putting aside Miss Immy's bottle with one exquisitely gloved hand; "It is my father I see!" she added, with a very slight foreign accent.

"To be zure, Miss Margy!" struck in Mr. Mat. "To be zure it's your vather! And he wouldn't hurt ye on ony account. Don't you be afraid of the Squire. He has no more vice in him than a lamb!"

"Don't be a fool, Mat! My girl afraid of me!" shouted the Squire.

"My opinion is, the lass is frightened!" returned Mr. Mat, in an under tone to the Squire, looking at Margaret shrewdly as he spoke, with a sort of observant look with which he would have examined a sick animal. "Mayhap," he continued in the same aside tone, "its the dogs. I'll take 'em off."

"I'm right glad to hear you speak English, and speak it very well too, my dear. I was beginning to be afraid you could speak nothing but French," said the Squire.

"Oh yes, sir," said his daughter. She had now risen to her feet, rather disappointed that her

father had not raised her from the ground, and pressed her to his bosom ;—as he probably would have done if he had not been too much afraid of injuring her toilet ;—“ Oh yes, sir, thanks to my kind instructors I have cultivated my native language.”

“ That’s a comfort,” said the Squire ; “ for I am ashamed to say that I have cultivated no other ! But Kate there, and Lady Farnleigh, will talk to you in French as long as you like.”

Upon this, Kate, who had hitherto hung back, looking on the scene which has been described with a sort of dismayed surprise, that had the effect of making her feel all of a sudden shy towards her sister, came forward, and putting her arm round Margaret’s waist, gave her a kiss, saying as she did so, “ Shall we go in, dear ? You must be tired. And Miss Immy will not be contented till you have had something to eat and drink.”

“ *Ma sœur !* ” exclaimed the new-comer ; again compressing into that word a whole homily for the benefit of the bystanders on all the beauty and sanctity of that sweet relationship ; and returning Kate’s kiss first on one cheek and then on the other.

And then they all went into the drawing-room, the two sisters walking with their arms round each other’s waists.

They were singularly alike, and yet singularly contrasted, those twin Lindisfarn lasses,—to use Mr. Mat's mode of speech. Kate was a little the taller of the two;—a very little; but till one saw the sisters side by side, as they were then walking across the hall to the drawing-room, the difference of height in Kate's favour might have been supposed to be greater than it really was. Both had a magnificent abundance of that dark chestnut hair, the rich brown gloss of which really does imitate the colour of a ripe horse-chestnut fresh from its husk. But Kate wore hers in large heavy curls on either side of her face and neck, while Margaret's was arranged in exquisitely neat bands bound closely round the small and classically shaped head. Both had fine eyes; but with respect to that difficultly described feature, it was much less easy to say in what the two sisters differed, and in what they were alike, than in the more simple matter of the hair. At first sight one was inclined to say that the eyes were totally different in the two. Then a closer examination convinced the observer that in both girls they were large, well-opened, and marked by that specially limpid appearance which suggests the same idea of great depth which is given by an unruffled and perfectly pellucid pool of still water. In both girls they were of that beautiful brown colour, which is so frequently found in conjunction

with the above-noted appearance. And yet, notwithstanding all these points of similarity, the eyes of the two sisters,—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say the expression of them,—was remarkably different. Those who saw them both, when no particular emotion was affecting the expression of their features, would have said that Margaret's eyes were the more tender and loving. But those who knew Kate well, would have said, "Wait till the eyes have some special message of tenderness from the heart, and *then* look at them." Kate's eyes were the more mobile and changeful in expression; Margaret's the more languishing. There was perhaps more of intellect in the former, more of sentiment in the latter. In complexion the difference was most complete and decided. Kate's complexion was a brilliant one. Though the skin was as perfectly transparent as the purest crystal, and even the most transient emotion betrayed itself in the heightened or diminished colour of the cheek, its own proper hue was of a somewhat richer tint than that of the hedge-rose. The whole of Margaret's face, on the contrary, was perfectly pale. The skin was of that beautiful satiny texture, and alabaster-like purity of white, which is felt by many men to be more beautiful than any of the most exquisite colouring. Perhaps this absolute absence of colour helped to impart to the eyes of Margaret Lindisfarn that peculiar

depth and languishing appearance of tenderness which so remarkably characterised them. Both girls had specially beautiful and slender figures; but that of Kate had more of elasticity and vigour; that of her sister more of lithe yieldingness and flexibility. Both had long, slender, gracefully-formed hands; but those of Margaret were the whiter and more satiny of the two. Both had in equal perfection the beauty of ancle, instep, and foot which insures a clean race-horse-like action and graceful gait. Yet the carriage of the two sisters was as remarkably different as anything about them. Kate's every step expressed decision, energy, vigour, elasticity,—frankness, if one may predicate such a quality of a step. Margaret's gait, on the contrary, seemed perfectly adapted to express timidity, languor, and graceful softness in its every movement. On the whole, the differences between the two sisters would be what would first strike a stranger on seeing them for the first time. The points of similarity between them would be noted afterwards, or might never be discovered at all unless by the intelligent eye of some particularly interested or habitually accurate observer.

And then the somewhat uphill process of making acquaintance with the stranger had to be gone through. And Margaret did not appear to be one of those who are gifted with the special

tact and facilities which make such processes rapid and easy. The cake and wine was administered, Miss Immy standing over the patient the while, with one hand on her hip, filled to overflowing with the kindest thoughts and intentions, but having very much the air of a severe hospital nurse enforcing some very disagreeable discipline. But Miss Margaret nibbled a morsel of cake, and having put into a tumbler of water just enough wine to slightly colour it, she sipped a little of the uninviting mixture.

“Bless me, my dear!” cried the old lady, whose speech was, like that of most of her contemporaries in a similar rank of life at that period, tinctured with a very unmistakeable flavour of provincialism, “*Du* let me *pit* a little drop more wine into your glass; zems to me, it a’int fit drink for either man or beast in that fashion.”

“*Merci, madame!* Thank you! I always water my wine so much. I am used to it;” said Margaret.

“Well, if you are used to it, my dear, but to my mind it seems like spoiling *tew* good things. Better drink clean water, than water bewitched that fashion! The Lindisfarn water is celebrated.”

“It is very good, thank you, madame.”

“Are they well off for water in Paris?” asked the Squire, catching at the subject in his difficulty of finding anything to say to his new daughter.

"Oh, we had always exquisite water, sir;" replied Margaret with more of warmth in her tone than she had yet put into it. "Madame de R-rwenneville," (this strange orthography is intended, however inadequate, to represent the most perfectly executed Parisian *grassement* :) "Madame de R-rwenneville was always very particular about the filtering of the water."

"Filtering!" cried Mr. Mat in a tone of the profoundest contempt. "You can't make bad water into good by filtering, filter as much as you will. We'll do better than that for you here, Miss Margy!"

"I'm very particular about my filtering too, my dear;" said Mr. Lindisfarn; "the Sillshire gravel does it for me. There's my filtering machine up above the house there, all covered over with forest trees for ornament." And the Squire laughed at his conceit, a huge but not unmusical laugh, which set every panel in the wainscoting on the wall vibrating.

Margaret opened her fine eyes to their utmost extent, and gazed on her father with astonishment, very near akin to dismay.

"We had very fine forest trees at Paris," she said after a little pause, "in the garden of the Tuileries and the Champs Elysées."

"Ah! I am longing for you to tell me all about Paris," said Kate; "I should so like to see it."

And all about aunt, and poor M. de Renneville. It is very sad. We shall never get to the end of all we have to say to each other !”

“Well ! I shall go and beat the turnips in the copse-side twelve acres,” said the Squire, rising. “Come along, Mat. Call the dogs. Good-bye till dinner time, my dear ; Miss Immy and Kate are longing to show you all the old place. You will soon feel yourself at home among us. But I daresay it will seem dull at first after Paris.”

And so saying the Squire and Mr. Mat left the room.

“Now, Miss Immy,” said Kate, “I shall take possession of Margaret till dinner time. I’m sure you must have a thousand things to do ; and I mean to have her all to myself.”

“Good-bye, dears ; I’m all behind-hand to-day. Phoebe brought in the morning’s eggs hours ago ; and I have not had time to mark ’em yet. Kate will show you your room, Margy dear. I hope you will find all to your liking. But it’s to be thought, that our Sillshire ways may be different to your French fashion : but if there is anything we can get, you’ve only to speak. I did go into Silvertown myself yesterday, to see if I could find any French-fashioned things. But I could only find a bit of Paris soap at Piper’s the perfumer’s. I got that. You will find it in your room, dear.”

And so Miss Immy bustled off on her avocations, leaving the two sisters together.

"Don't let us stay here," said Kate; "come upstairs and see your room and mine. They are close together, with a door between them. Is not that charming? That is the door of the library," she continued, as they crossed the hall; "we must not go in now."

"Is it kept locked?" said Margaret.

"Good gracious, no! Locked! What should it be locked for?" rejoined Kate with much surprise.

"I thought it might be, as you said we must not go in. Besides, if it is left open we might get at the books, you know; all sorts of books. Not that I should ever dream of doing anything so wrong, of course."

"Get at the books! Why, Margy dear, what are books made for, but to be got at? I get at them, I can tell you!"

"Oh, Kate! I have never been used to do anything without the knowledge of my dear aunt. What would papa think of you, if he found you out?"

"Good heavens, Margaret, what are you dreaming of?" cried Kate in extreme astonishment, and colouring up at some of the unpleasant ideas her sister had called up in her mind. "Found me out! found me out in using the books in the library! I don't understand you. I used to be

afraid sometimes, some ten years ago, of being found out in *not* using them !”

“But you said we must not go in,” rejoined Margaret.

“Because if we once went in, it would take up all the time till dinner ; because I want to take you upstairs first. There are so many things to show you. The library must wait till to-morrow morning.”

“We will ask Papa, at dinner time, if I may go there.”

“Ask Papa ! Why Noll will think you crazy.”

“And pray who is Noll ?” asked her sister.

“Noll ! why Papa to be sure ! Don’t you know the name of your own father, Oliver Lindisfarn, Esquire, of Lindisfarn Chase ? But that is too long for every-day use ; so I call him Noll for short.”

“Oh, my sister ! Respect for our parents I have always been taught to consider one of our most sacred duties. What would Papa say, if he knew that you called him Noll ?”

Kate stared at her sister in absolutely speechless astonishment and dismay ;—dismay at the wide gulf which she seemed to be discovering between her sister and herself, and the long path which would have to be travelled over by one or other of them before she and her sister could meet in that sisterly union of mind and heart which she had

been looking forward to with such pleasurable anticipation;—and speechlessness from the difficulty she felt in choosing at which point, of all those suggested by Margaret's last speech, she should begin her explanations.

“*If* Papa were to hear me!” she said at length; “why he never hears anything else. It's as natural to him to hear me say Noll, as to hear the rooks in the rookery say ‘caw!’ I never do anything,—we none of us here do anything, that the others don't know of.” (Here Margaret shot a glance half shrewdly observant and half knowingly confidential at her sister; but withdrew her eyes in the next instant.) “But perhaps things may be different in France,” continued Kate, endeavouring to make the unknown quantity of this difference accountable for all that she found perplexing and strange to her in the manifestations of her sister's modes of thinking; “but you will soon get used to our ways, dearest; and to begin with, you must take to calling Papa Noll at once. He is such a dear, darling old Noll!”

“I! I could never, never dare do such a thing. Besides, do you know, Kate,” continued Margaret with no little solemnity in her manner, “I think, indeed I am almost *sure*, that Madame de R-rwenneville would say that it was *vulgar* to do so.”

“Oh! then of course we must give it up,” said Kate. She could not resist at the moment the

temptation of so far resenting the impertinence involved in her sister's remark; but she repented of the implied sneer in the next moment. But she need hardly have taken herself to task, for Margaret replied with all gravity:

"I think indeed that it would be better to do so, my sister!"

"Nonsense! you're joking, Margy dear. I would not call darling old Noll by any other name, and he would not have me call him by any other name for all the world. What Madame de Renneville says may be very right for Paris, but we are in Sillshire here, and have other ways. You'll soon get used to us. See, dear, this is your room!"

It was a charming room, with one large bow-window looking out on the trim and pretty though rather old-fashioned garden, on the east side of the house.

"Oh what an immense room!" cried Margaret. "This my chamber! Why one might give a ball in it. It must be very cold."

"If you find it so, you shall have a fire; but I hardly think you will, our Sillshire climate is so mild;—much milder than London. See, this is my room; just such another as yours, with the same look out on the garden. I hardly ever have a fire. Used you to have one in your bedroom in Paris?"

"No; but then my chamber was a small one, not a third the size of this; and very well closed,—very pretty,—a love of a little chamber."

"I like a large room," said Kate, a little disappointed at the small measure of approbation the accommodation—which she had flattered herself was perfect, and which was in fact all that any lady could possibly desire—elicited from her Parisian-bred sister. "See, here are all my books, and my writing-table. I keep my drawing-table and all my drawing things on this side because of the light; and that leaves plenty of room for the toilet table in front here. I should never have room for all these things in a small room."

"It seems very nice, certainly. Are you allowed to have a light at night?"

"Why.....how do you mean, dear? We don't go to bed in the dark!"

"But I mean, are you allowed to keep your candle as long as you like?"

"Of course I keep it till I go to bed! Don't you do so too?"

"But if you are as long as you like about going to bed, you may do anything you please,—read any books you like, after they are all in bed and asleep. But I suppose," added she thoughtfully, "that the old woman downstairs sees how much candle you have burned."

"What strange notions you have, Margaret,"

said Kate, almost sadly, and she began to perceive that the distance that separated her from her sister was greater than she had at first seen it to be. "I *am* as long as ever I like about going to bed—which generally is as short as I can make it;—and I *do* read any books I like after they are all in bed and asleep;—or rather I wish I did, and should do so, were it not that I am always a great deal too sleepy myself. Are you good at keeping awake? I wish I was? And as to the old woman downstairs, as you call her, that is Miss Immy; and I don't think she looks much after the candle-ends;—though it must be, by the way, about the only thing that she don't look after, for she looks after everything. Dear Miss Immy! I don't know what Noll and I should do without Miss Immy. And you must learn to love her as much as we do."

"Who is she? Your *gouvernante*, I suppose. What a queer name, Miss Immy!"

"Miss Immy, Margy dear, is Miss Imogene Lindisfarn, the sister of our grandfather, Oliver Lindisfarn, and therefore our father's aunt. She has lived at the Chase all her life, and nothing would go on without her."

"What a strange old woman she seems! I don't think she likes me by the way she spoke to me. And who is that extraordinary looking man, who looked at me as if I had been some strange thing out of the *Jardin des Plantes*?"

“The extraordinary looking man,” said Kate, laughing heartily, “is Matthew Lindisfarn, Esquire, commonly called Mr. Mat; a cousin of Noll’s, also inseparable from and very necessary to the Chase. We could not get on without Mr. Mat. You will see him looking rather less extraordinary at dinner presently. And you will very soon get to like him too, as well as Miss Immy.”

“Is he a gentleman?” asked the stranger.

“Margaret!” cried Kate, and her eyes flashed, and her colour mounted to her cheeks as she spoke; “Did I not tell you that his name is Lindisfarn? Ask Lady Farnleigh, or the Dean, or old Brian Wyvill, or Dick Cox the ploughboy, whether he is a gentleman. But as I said before,” she continued, putting her arm round her sister’s waist and kissing her cheek, “you must get to know us all and our ways, and then you will understand it all better, and come to be one of us. Of course it must all be very different from life at Paris, and all very strange to you.”

“Oh, so different!” said Margaret.

“And then there will be so many other people for you to know and to like ;—Uncle Theophilus and Lady Sempronia ;—and first and foremost my own darling Lady Farnleigh. And then I must introduce you to all our *beaux*! We have some very presentable ones, I assure you. And we shall have such lots to do. And now we must be thinking of

dressing for dinner. You have to unpack your things."

"Are there people coming to dine here to-day?" asked Margaret.

"No, nobody. There will not be a soul but ourselves," replied Kate.

"But must we dress then?" asked her sister; "why should we do so?"

"Oh, we always dress for dinner;—that is, put on an evening dress, you know. Noll likes it. I think I had better ring for Simmons. She is our maid, between us two, you know. If you don't like setting to work to unpack, now,—and we should hardly have time before dinner,—I can lend you anything."

And so a partial unpacking was done; and amid perpetual running to and fro between the two bedrooms by the door of communication;—repeated declarations that they should not be dressed in time for dinner, and warnings from Simmons to the same effect, followed by fresh interruptions for admiration, criticism, and comparison, the dressing was at last done, and the two girls hurried down the great staircase, just as the last bell was ringing, leaving both their rooms strewn with a chaos of feminine properties, which Simmons declared it would be a week's work to reduce to order.

Of course during the entirety of the couple of hours thus delightfully spent by the two sisters,

the tongues of both of them were running a well contested race ; but it is hardly to be expected that a masculine pen should undertake to report even any *disjecta membra* of such a conversation. Simmons, however, though her tongue was not altogether idle, employed her eyes and ears the while with more activity. And a brief statement of her report, as made that evening to the assembled areopagus in the servants' hall, may perhaps afford the judicious reader as much insight into the character of the newly arrived Miss Lindisfarn, as could be drawn from a more detailed account of the enormous mass of chatter that had passed between the two girls.

Miss Simmons then announced it as her opinion that Miss Margaret was "a deep one." "'Twere plain enough to see," she added, "that her maxim was, 'What's yours is mine ; and what's mine's my own.'"

"Any ways she's a dewtiful daater!" said old Brian Wyvill ; "I never zeed in all my life,—and that's not zaying a little,—anything so bewtiful as when she were a zupplicating the Squoire like on the stone steps. 'Twere as good as any play ; and I've zeed a many of 'em in my time."

"For my part," said rosy Betty housemaid, "I don't like the colour of her!"

"I tell you all," rejoined Simmons, speaking with the authority of a somewhat superior position,

"she is no more tu be compared tu our Miss Kate than Lindisfarn church is tu the cathedral of Silverton."

"'Twould be very unreasonable, and very unfair on her to expect she should be," said Mr. Banting; "Miss Kate's Lindisfarn bred!"

"Ay," said the cook, "and Lindisfarn fed! What can you expect from poor creatures that live on bread and water supe, and vrogs, with a bit of cabbage on Zundays?"

The self-evident truth of this proposition was recognised by a chorus of "Ay, indeed!"

"She's a sweet pretty lass, anyway," said Thomas Tibbs the coachman; "and she were Lindisfarn born, if she weren't Lindisfarn bred. And there's a deal in blood."

"Ay! there be," said Dick Wyvill the groom, a son of old Brian. "But pretty much depends on the way they are broke."

Meanwhile the dinner in the parlour had passed a little heavily. Notwithstanding the near relationship of the new-comer, all the party were conscious of a certain slight degree of restraint. Miss Immy was nervously afraid that her domestic arrangements might fail in some way or other to satisfy the requirements and tastes of her Parisian niece. She had held a long consultation with the cook respecting the production of some sample of presumed French cookery; and no pains had been

spared in the preparation of a squat-looking lump of imperfectly baked dough, which appeared on the table under the appellation of a *vol-au-vent*. And Miss Immy was rather disappointed, though at the same time reassured and comforted as to the future, when Miss Margaret, utterly declining to try the *vol-au-vent*, made an excellent dinner on a slice of roast-beef, only requesting her Papa to cut it from the most underdone part, and rather shocking all present by observing that she "loved it bleeding."

Hannah the cook gave the untouched *vol-au-vent* entire to Dick the ploughboy, and drew the most favourable auguries as to Margaret's rapid physical, moral, and intellectual improvement, when she heard of the manner in which that young lady had preferred to dine.

Nevertheless, the dinner, as has been said, passed rather heavily. The squire himself was not without anxiety as to the possibility of making his Parisian-bred daughter comfortable, happy, and contented with all at Lindisfarn. And Mr. Mat was tormented by suspicions that the new member of the family might turn out to be "fine," and that Paris airs might be even worse than London ones. And Margaret herself was labouring under the influence of that undefinable sense of uneasiness which the Italians well call "subjection." She had that unpleasant feeling towards Mr. Mat which arises from the consciousness of having greatly

erred in one's estimate of the social position of anybody, and perhaps, for ought one can tell, manifested one's mistake. It would have given me a very favourable opinion of the young lady's gentle breeding, if she *had* at once discovered that Mr. Mat, as seen in his green coat and buff gaiters, was to all intents and purposes a gentleman. But it would be hard to blame her too severely for having mistaken him for a gamekeeper. As to her father, she seemed to feel more strongly than ever the utter impossibility of calling him "Noll." It appeared to her that she had never seen so striking an impersonation of aristocratic and respect-compelling dignity ;—and she was not far wrong.

The evening too passed slowly ; and at a very early hour it was voted *nem. con.* that the traveller must be tired, and must be wanting to go to bed. But there was one matter which had already given Margaret much pain two or three times during this her first afternoon in her father's house ; and when, as they were all taking their candlesticks to go to bed, an opportunity occurred of adverting to the subject, she was determined to attempt a remedy for the evil while it might yet be not incurable.

" Good night, Margy, my darling, and God bless thee !" said her father, putting one hand fondly on her head, and kissing her on the forehead.

" Good night, Miss Margy. If you over-sleep

yourself I'll give you a rouse in the morning with the dogs under your window ;" said Mr. Mat.

" Good night, Margy dear. I trust your bed and all will be as you like it, and that you will sleep well," said Miss Immy.

And, " Come along, Margy dear ! We shan't get to bed before we have had some more talk, I'll be bound," said Kate.

The utterers of all these kindly "good-nights" had little notion that they were inflicting so many stabs in the heart of the object of them. But so it was ; and the reiterated blows were more than she could bear. Was her migration *au fond du province* to involve a transformation of herself into a dairy-maid, that she should be called "Margy ?" It was too odious. It would be "Mag" next ! She could not bear it. And then before strangers too ; they would no doubt do the same ! Before *des jeunes gens* ! She should sink into the earth. So while the tears gathered in her fine eyes,—“tears from the depth of some divine despair,”—she looked round on the blank faces of the little circle gathered about her, and clasping her hands in an attitude of unexceptionable elegance, exclaimed in tones of the most touching entreaty,—

“ Oh ! call me Marrguérrwite ;—not that horrid name. My father ! my sister ! dear friends ! call me Marrguérrwite !” she said, uttering the word in a manner wholly unattainable by insular organs.

The little party looked at each other in blank dismay, while the suppliant continued to hold her hands clasped in a sort of circular appeal.

"My love," said the Squire, "you shall be called any way you like best. Let it be Margaret; but I'll be shot if I can say it as you do, not if 'twas to save my life."

"To my thinking, 'Margy' is quite a pretty name," said Mr. Mat, more confirmed than ever in his suspicions of latent "finery."

"But, sissy darling," said Kate, laughing and putting her arm caressingly round her sister's waist, "I am as bad as Noll. I could not say the name as you say it, not if I were to put a hot chestnut in my mouth every time! But I'll never say 'Margy' again. Let me say Margaret!"

"I think that people ought to be called as they like best," said Miss Immy. "I've been called Miss Immy nearly four-score years; and I should not like to be called anything else. So I shall always call her 'Margy sweet,' since that is what she likes best!"

And Miss Immy toddled off, holding her flat candlestick at arm's length in front of her, and shaking her head in a manner that seemed to be intended to express the most irrevocable determination.

CHAPTER VI.

WALTER ELLINGHAM.

LADY FARNLEIGH had asked Kate, as the reader may possibly remember, to be sure to ride over to Wanstrow not later than the next day but one after the arrival of her sister. But on the morrow of the evening spoken of in the last chapter, Kate heard her godmother's cheery ringing voice in the hall, asking for her before she had left her bedroom.

She was just about doing so, and hurrying downstairs to be in time to tell the servants not to ring the breakfast-bell, for her sister was still sleeping and she would not have her wakened, when she found Lady Farnleigh in the hall in her riding-habit.

"What, Kate turned sluggard! you too? We shall have the larks lying a-bed till the sun has aired the world for them next. I doubted whether I should be in time for breakfast; has the bell rung?"

"No. And I want to prevent them from ringing it this morning. Margaret is still fast asleep, and I won't let her be waked. She had a fatiguing journey of it, you know."

"But it's past nine o'clock, child. Our new sister must have a finely cultivated talent for sleeping. You were not late, I suppose?"

"To tell you the truth we were rather late,—that is, she and I were. We had so much to talk of to each other, you know. How good of you to ride over this morning, you good fairy of a god-mamma!"

"And like the fairies I get the bloom of the day for my pains. Such a ride! It is the loveliest morning."

"I must send to tell Noll and the others that there is to be no bell this morning, or else they'll be waiting for it. And then we'll go to breakfast. You must be ready for yours."

"Sha'n't be sorry to get it. I had no thought of riding over to-day, you know; but last night I made up my mind to do so, for a whole chapter of reasons."

"Of which any one would have been sufficient, I should hope."

"Nevertheless you shall have them all. In the first place, I could not restrain my impatient curiosity to see what our new sister is like. In the next place, I thought that perhaps she might

ride over with you to-morrow. And in that case, it would be more *selon les convenances*,—and we must be upon our P's and Q's with our visitor from Paris, you know,—that I should call first upon her. It is not the usual hour for a morning call, it is true; but no doubt she will consider that the *mode du pays*."

"She will consider that you are the kindest and best of fairy godmothers!"

"But I am no godmother of hers, you know, fairy or mortal. But you have not heard all my reasons for coming yet; I am come to ask permission to introduce to you an old and valued friend."

"You are joking! As if there was any need of your asking permission to bring anybody here!"

"Nevertheless, I choose upon this occasion to ask permission;—your father's at all events, Miss Kate, even if I am to take yours as a matter of course."

"As if Noll would not be just as much surprised at your asking as I can be!"

"Nevertheless, I say again, I choose in this case to let you all know who and what the person is that I propose to bring to you, before I do so."

"Is he something so very terrible then?"

"I had not said that it was a 'he' at all, Miss Kate. However, you are right. It is a 'he.' And as for the terribleness of him, that you must

judge for yourself. I have told you that it is one in whom I am greatly interested."

"And surely that makes all other information on the subject unnecessary."

"Thanks, Kate, for thinking so. But I don't think so. Did you ever hear of Lord Ellingham?"

"I have seen the name in the debates in the House of Lords, but that is all."

"Lord Ellingham has been a widower many years; and it is a long time since I have seen him. But his wife was the dearest friend I ever had,—not dearer, perhaps, than your mother, Kate; but at all events an older friend. She was the friend of my girlhood, and I lost her before I came to live in this part of the country. She left her husband with four young sons. The gentleman I purpose asking your father's permission to bring here is the third of these. Lord Ellingham, I should tell you, is very far from being a wealthy man,—and his third son is a very poor one, pretty nearly as dependent on his own exertions for his daily bread as any one of your father's labourers. You see, therefore, that my friend Walter Ellingham is by no means what match-making mammas call an 'eligible' young man. He has not been found eligible for much either, poor fellow, by his masters, my Lords of the Admiralty. His father is a leading member of the Opposition,—though of course that can have nothing to do with it.

The fact is, however, that at thirty years of age Walter Ellingham, 'Honourable' though he be, is but a lieutenant in His Majesty's navy; and thinks himself fortunate in having obtained the command of a revenue cutter, stationed on our coast here. I found a letter when I got home yesterday evening, telling me all about it. He hopes to be able to come up to Wanstrow the day after to-morrow; and as I daresay we shall frequently see him during the time he is stationed here, I purpose bringing him over to you. And that is the third reason for my morning ride."

"But you haven't said a word, you mysterious fairy godmother, to explain why you thought it necessary to ask a special permission to make us this present. Of course you will send him up to Lindisfarn in a pumpkin drawn by eight white mice, with a grasshopper for coachman. And I do hope he'll have a very tall feather in his cap!"

"Suffice it that in the plenitude of my fairy wisdom I did choose to ask permission before starting the pumpkin. As for the feather in his cap, I have little doubt that it will come in due time. It is some years since I have seen Walter, but from my remembrance of him, I should be inclined to prefer some other trade to that of a smuggler on the Sillshire coast just at present. But what about this breakfast, Kate?"

"I must go and look after Miss Immy. The

event of yesterday has put us all out of our usual clockwork order, I think. I daresay Miss Immy is deep in speculation as to the modes and times at which French people get up and get their breakfasts."

"I shall go and speak to the Squire by myself. I suppose I shall find him in the study?"

"Yes, do. And tell him he may come to breakfast without waiting for the bell this morning."

So Lady Farnleigh made her way to the sanctum which country gentlemen will persist in calling their "study," for the purpose of having five minutes' conversation with the Squire, on the subject which was uppermost in her mind, in a rather graver tone than that which she had used in speaking to Kate; and the latter went to discover the cause of such an unprecedented event as the non-appearance of Miss Immy in the breakfast-room exactly as the clock over the stables struck nine.

It was very nearly a quarter past that hour, when the family party, with the exception of the new-comer met in the breakfast-room.

"Why, Miss Immy! it's near a quarter past nine, as I am living man," cried the Squire. "We shall begin to think that you are getting old, if you break rules in this way!"

"Not so old by a quarter of an hour as you make me out, Mr. Lindisfarn!" said Miss Immy,

rattling the teacups about. "The clock is ever so much too fast."

"I dare say the sun got up a little before his time when he saw it was such a lovely morning."

"You know I am always in the room by nine o'clock, Mr. Lindisfarn;" reiterated Miss Immy, who would have gone to the stake rather than admit that she was late.

"Always! It shall be always nine o'clock when you come into the breakfast-room; as it's always one o'clock in Parson Mayford's parish out on the moor when the Parson is hungry. The clerk sets the church clock every day by his Reverence's appetite: and they say there's no parish in the moor keeps such good time."

"I think I must get Mr. Mayford to come and stay with me while at Wanstrow," said Lady Farnleigh, "for our Wanstrow clocks are always at sixes and sevens."

"Ah! but the Wanstrow air is not so keen as it is on the moor. Parson's appetite would be slower in getting its edge; and your Ladyship would be half an hour behind time at least," said Mat.

"I should get you to calculate the difference, and work out the mean time accordingly, Mr. Mat; will you be my astronomer?"

"You mean gastronomer, godmamma! That would be more what would be needed for the business in hand," said Kate.

"I wonder when Margy will be down. No, I mustn't say that," cried the Squire correcting himself. "Poor lass, I wouldn't vex her for the world."

"Vex her! what should vex her?" inquired Lady Farnleigh.

"She don't like being called Margy," explained Kate; "we quite annoyed her, all of us, by calling her Margy. She has been used to be called Margu  rite. And I am afraid I hurt her last night by laughing at her French pronunciation of it—which was very silly of me. But we put it all right afterwards."

"And you were half the night in doing it, I'll bet a wager," said the Squire; "and that's why she can't get up this morning."

"Yes, we were rather late. Just think how much we have to talk about," said Kate.

"And no time except last night to do it in," laughed the Squire.

"And she must be tired after her journey, poor lass," said Mr. Mat.

"I dare say she is stirring by this time," said Kate; "I will go and look for her."

"I am going into Silvertown; has anybody any commands?" said Mr. Mat.

"Of course you will call in the Close; and tell them she is come. Say that we shall come in to-morrow," answered Kate.

"I'll take the dogs, and go with you as far as the brook," said the Squire.

So the gentlemen took themselves off; Miss Immy toddled off to her usual domestic avocations, and Lady Farnleigh was left alone in the breakfast-room, while Kate ran upstairs to look for her sister.

In a very few minutes she returned, bringing down Miss Margaret with her into the breakfast-room, where she was presented in due form to Lady Farnleigh. Margaret executed a courtesy, with proper eyelid *manege* to match, to which Mr. Turveydrop, or any other equally competent master of "deportment," would have awarded a crown of laurel on the spot.

"You have had plenty of warm-hearted welcoming to Lindisfarn, but you must let me say welcome to Sillshire, Marguérite; for 'we Zillshire volk,' as Mr. Mat loves to say, look upon Sillshire as a common possession, of which we are all uncommonly proud."

"It is a nice country; I am sure of it, madame,my lady," said Margaret, correcting herself and blushing painfully.

"Oh, you must not 'my lady' me; Kate here calls me all sorts of names,very bad ones sometimes!" said Lady Farnleigh, with mock gravity.

Margaret threw her fine eyes, eloquent with

surprised and sorrowful reproachfulness, on her sister.

"But then," continued Lady Farnleigh, as she shot, on her side, a glance of shrewd observation on Margaret, "Kate has a sad habit of calling names."

"Madame de Renneville strictly forbade me ever to do such a thing," rejoined Margaret; "she always said that there was nothing more vulgar."

"We must send Kate to the school where 'them as learns manners pays twopence extra,'and pay the twopence for her!" said Lady Farnleigh, with a queer look at Kate; while Margaret opened her magnificent large eyes to their utmost extent, in utterly mystified astonishment.

"But however we call one another," continued Lady Farnleigh, changing her tone, "we must learn, my dear Miss Lindisfarn, to be very great friends; for your poor dear mother loved me, and I loved her very dearly. Love between you and me is a matter of inheritance."

"You are very good, madame. I never had the happiness to know my sainted mother," said Margaret with a sigh, the profundity of which was measured with the most skilful accuracy to the exact requirement of the nicest propriety on the occasion.

"Here comes some hot coffee for you, Margaret dear," said Kate. "We all take tea, but Miss Immy

thought that you probably took coffee; and here is some of our famous Sillshire cream. Now what will you have to eat? a fresh egg, warranted under Miss Immy's own sign-manual to have been laid this morning? See, there is the dear old soul's mark! If the egg were to be taken from the nest to be put into the saucepan the next instant, Miss Immy would insist on marking it with the day of the month, before it was boiled."

"Only a bit of bread, if you please," replied the Parisian-bred girl. "And I should like to have a little hot milk with my coffee, if I might."

"Instead of our Sillshire cream? You shall have what you like, darling, but we must keep it a close secret. What will Sillshire say?"

"I am afraid the cream is too rich. I always take coffee and milk and a bit of bread;—nothing else."

"Ah! Sillshire air will soon avenge your neglect of our good things," said Lady Farnleigh. "Do you ride, Marguérite?"

"I have never been on a horse;.....Madame de Renneville did not consider mounting on horseback in all respects desirable."

Lady Farnleigh and Kate exchanged glances involuntarily, and the former said, "I dare say Madame de Renneville may have been right, as regards Paris; but you can understand, my dear, that it is of course a very different thing here.

Kate and I ride a great deal ; and I hope you will ride with us. You must learn at once. Mr. Mat will be an excellent riding-master for you."

"It would give me great pleasure to ride with you, Lady Farnleigh," replied Margaret, with just the slightest perceptible accent on the "you;" "but I am afraid I should be very stupid at it."

"Oh, you would soon learn, with Mr. Mat for your master," rejoined Kate.

"Kate was to have ridden over to see me to-morrow," pursued Lady Farnleigh, "and I hoped that you would have come with her ; but now it seems you are to go into Silverton to-morrow ; and the day after—has Kate told you?—I am going to bring an old friend of mine to make acquaintance with you all here."

"No, I have not told her yet," said Kate. "An accession to our rather limited assortment of beaux, Margaret !.....Mr.....or Captain should I say?"

"Captain, by courtesy," said Lady Farnleigh, "though that is not his real rank in the Navy. But he is called Captain.....the Honourable Captain Ellingham."

"The Honourable Captain Ellingham. Is he the son of a Lord, then?" asked Margaret, who seemed remarkably well versed in such niceties of English social distinctions, for a young lady whose entire life had been spent in France. But it is to be presumed that Madame de Renneville had given

her personal care to that branch of her niece's education.

"Yes, Walter Ellingham is the son of Lord Ellingham; but for all that he is a very poor man, Margaret," replied Lady Farnleigh.

"Are Lords ever poor?" asked Margaret, with a surprised and somewhat disappointed expression of face.

"Yes, my dear; a poor Lord is unfortunately a by no means unprecedented phenomenon," replied Lady Farnleigh. "And what is still more lamentable, and still more to the purpose, when a Lord is poor, his third son is apt to be still poorer."

"And the Honourable Captain Ellingham is Lord Ellingham's third son?" asked Margaret.

"Even so," said Lady Farnleigh.

"Is the Mr. Falconer you were telling me of last night, Kate, a poor man too?" asked Margaret after a pause.

"I should think not," said Kate; "I don't know at all. I never remember to have heard the subject alluded to. But he is old Mr. Falconer's only child, and I should suppose that he must be rich."

"Oh yes! there is no mistake about that at all," said Lady Farnleigh; "Mr. Falconer the banker is well known to be a very 'warm' man, and if you are not English enough yet, Margaret, my dear, to understand the meaning of that phrase,

you will at least have no difficulty in comprehending what I mean when I say that Mr. Freddy Falconer is an extremely desirable '*parti*.' You will find that all the young ladies at Silverton, including your sister," continued Lady Farnleigh, with an archly malicious look at Kate, "consider him such, and all the old ladies too.....except one."

"You are always to pay implicit attention to all Lady Farnleigh says, sister dear, when she talks common sense," said Kate, "but you are never to pay the slightest attention to a word she utters when she has got her nonsense-cap on. And if you are in any doubt upon the subject, you have only to ask me; for I am her goddaughter, and know the ways of her."

"That is calling me a fool, by implication, and you have been told, Kate, once this morning already, on the authority of Madame de Renneville," said Lady Farnleigh *grasseyant* in the most perfect Parisian style, "how vulgar it is to do so. But I am afraid you are incorrigible. What can we do to improve her manners, my dear?"

"I am sure I shall always be very happy," began poor Margaret, dropping her eyelids, and speaking with a sort of purring consciousness of superiority.

But Kate, who, as she had very truly said, knew the ways of her godmother, and perceived with

dismay that she was beginning already to conceive a prejudice against Margaret, hurried to rescue her from the damaging and dangerous position which she saw was being prepared for her.

"Now, you malicious fairy godmother, don't be hypocritical. It was you who told Margaret that I was in the habit of calling you bad names. What could she think? And her remark thereon was very natural. Now I won't let you turn yourself all of a sudden into the shape of a great white cat, and hunt her, poor little mouse, all round the room. I can see by the look of you that that is what you're bent on."

"What would Madame de Renneville say to that?" exclaimed Lady Farnleigh, turning to Margaret with a look of appeal.

"Never mind Madame de Renneville....." began Kate.

"Kate!" cried Margaret, in a tone deeply laden with reproach, but skilfully modulated so as to seem uttered more in sorrow than in anger, and casting her eyes on her sister with an appealing look of warning, reproof, and tenderness combined.

And "Kate!" re-echoed Lady Farnleigh, in a similar tone, and with a similar look.

It became very evident to Kate's experienced perception that her godmamma was getting dangerous, and was bent on mischief. But she was fully determined to prevent, or at all events not to

contribute to her sister's becoming the victim of it. It was as much as she could do to prevent herself from laughing at Lady Farnleigh's last bit of parody. But biting her lips to preserve her gravity, she continued:

"What I wanted to say, was to ask on what authority you include me among the young ladies who are so enthusiastic on the subject of Mr. Falconer's eligibility."

"Kate!" said her incorrigible ladyship again, in the same accent and manner as before. But having been admonished by a look of entreaty from her goddaughter, administered *aside*, which she perfectly well understood, she said:

"Why, do you not think so? Does anybody not think so? Is he not very undeniably an eligible '*parti*'? Margaret very judiciously asked, before making up her mind on the subject, whether he too was as poor as Walter Ellingham. But we, who are well informed on that point can have no doubts on the subject. Why, old Mr. Falconer must be made of gold; whereas my poor friend Walter has but one bit of gold belonging to him, to the best of my belief. There can be no doubt, I think, which is the eligible and which is the ineligible man. It is clear enough, is it not, Margaret?"

But Kate, who was very anxious that her sister should not put her foot into the spring-trap thus

laid for her, but who nevertheless feared, in a manner which she unquestionably would not have feared a few hours ago, that Margaret might, if left to herself, run a danger of doing so, once again hurried to the rescue, by saying:

“One bit of gold! What can you mean, you enigmatical fairy? What is the one bit of gold that Captain Ellingham possesses, and how did he come by it?”

“Really I do not know how he came by it; but I never knew him without it. He always carries it inside his waistcoat.”

“What, a gold watch?” asked Margaret innocently.

“To be sure, a gold watch,” replied Lady Farnleigh; “what in the world else of gold could a man have thereabouts? How dull you are, Kate, this morning.”

“I always am dull at riddles; but we all know that a man carries a heart inside his waistcoat; and I suppose that is the article that your friend has of gold, as you say. I see, at all events, that he is a favourite of yours, godmamma.”

“He is,” said Lady Farnleigh briefly; “and you will all of you have an opportunity of judging,” she continued, “whether he deserves to be so, for your father has very kindly bidden me to bring him to dine here the day after to-morrow. And now, girls, I shall leave you; for of course you

want to be alone together. May I ask if Giles is there?"

"Yes. But come down with us to the stables, and mount there? I want to show Birdie to Margaret."

Birdie was a beautiful black mare, nearly thorough-bred, which had been a present from Lady Farnleigh to her goddaughter; and of all her treasures it was the one which Kate valued the most, and was the most proud of. A competent judge would have found a long list of good points to admire in Birdie; but even the most unskilled eye could not fail to be struck by the exceeding beauty of the coat, glossier than satin; by the fineness of the skin, as evidenced by the great veins in the neck showing through it; by the dainty elegance of the legs and pasterns; and above all, by the beauty of the small head, with its eyes, as keen, Kate used to say, as a hawk's, and as gentle as a dove's.

Margaret was accordingly much struck by Birdie's beauty, as the groom walked her about the stable-yard for the ladies to look at.

"Oh what a lovely creature!" she exclaimed; "I do not wonder that you are fond of riding on such a horse as that. But it would be a very different thing to ride on any one of these great clumsy looking beasts. I can never expect to have such a horse as that to ride!" lamented Margaret, as

she very accurately figured to herself the charming picture she would make, mounted in a becoming amazon costume upon so showily beautiful a steed.

"You shall ride Birdie, sister dear, and welcome, as soon as you have made some little progress under Mr. Mat's tuition; but I think you must begin with something a little steadier; for my darling Birdie, though she is as gentle as a lamb, is apt to be a little lively, the pretty creature."

"But I don't like the look of the something steadier," pouted Margaret.

"Nevertheless it is my advice, my dear," said Lady Farnleigh, "that you do not attempt to mount Birdie till Mr. Mat is ready to give you a certificate of competency. Birdie is not for every one's riding."

"But Kate can ride her," returned Margaret somewhat discontentedly.

"Ay! but Kate, let me tell you," said Lady Farnleigh, "is about the best lady rider in the county. Good bye, girls. You must give me an early day at Wanstrow, my dear. When shall it be? why not Wednesday? I am to dine here on Friday, the day after to-morrow. Will you say Wednesday, Kate? Make your father come if you can. If not, get Mr. Mat to come over with you. And come early."

"I do not think Papa will come," said Kate, "but

we shall be delighted. Mr. Mat shall drive Margaret in the gig, and I will ride."

"That's agreed then. Good bye."

"Now shall I show you the garden?" said Kate, after the two girls had watched Lady Farnleigh as she rode down towards the lodge till she was out of sight.

"No, not now, I think. Let us go and finish unpacking and putting away my things. I have ever so many more things to show you. And besides I want you to tell me all about this Mr. Falconer."

"The all is soon told," said Kate; "but first you tell me what you think of my godmother; is she not a darling?"

"I hardly know whether I like her or not," said Margaret. "I feel somehow not safe with her; and I can't quite make her out. One thing was quite clear, that she was not well pleased with your calling her a fairy, and making fun of her in that way. Tell me," added she musingly, after a pause, during which Kate had been pondering whether it would be better to attempt making her sister understand Lady Farnleigh a little better at once or to leave it to time to do so; "tell me whether the six thousand pounds that you are to have from her—that is, a hundred and fifty thousand francs, is it not?—are settled on you, or only given you by her will?"

"I declare I don't know," returned Kate, surprised; "I had never thought about it. No doubt Papa knows all about it; why do you ask?"

"Oh! only that the one is certain, and the other uncertain. That is all," answered Margaret.

END OF PART II.

Part Third.

CHAPTER VII.

MY "THINGS."

So the two girls—the Lindisfarn lasses, as Mr. Mat called them, the Lindisfarn co-heiresses, as they have been called in a preceding chapter—returned to the house. It may be as well, however, to explain before going any further that they were not very accurately so called. They were in no legal sense co-heiresses to the Lindisfarn property; for the entail went no further than the male heir of Oliver, and, failing such, the male heir of his brother. Failing male heirs of both of these, the property was at the disposal of the Squire. But nobody had any doubt that his two daughters would inherit the property, as was natural, in equal proportions. Nevertheless, it was in the Squire's power to modify the disposition of it in any manner he might think fit. The two girls, on Margaret's proposition, as has been said, returned to their rooms to complete the delightful work of unpacking the Parisian sister's wardrobe, which

the dinner hour had compelled them to leave in the midst on the previous evening.

A rapid progress was made in the unpacking; but the "putting away," did not proceed with equal celerity. There was all the difference that there is between destroying a theory or system, and re-constructing it. Pulling down, alas! is always quicker and easier work than building up. And in the present instance the more laborious and less amusing task was left to Simmons. Of course Margaret had the most to show; and then her "things" were Parisian "things." Toilettes and demi-toilettes, *toilettes de bal*, and *toilettes du bois*, *toilettes de matin*, and *toilettes de soir*! A brilliant dioramic exhibition, illustrated, and varied by interspersed disquisitions and explanations of the glories and pleasures of the French metropolis.

Kate's wardrobe contained but one costume which was not outshone by anything in its own department belonging to that of her sister, and which attracted Margaret's special interest and admiration—her riding-habit and its appendages. Nothing would satisfy her but that Kate should put herself in complete riding-dress; and when she had done so, Margaret insisted on trying on the habit herself. And then it appeared, and was specially noted and pointed out by the Parisian-bred girl, that her waist was a trifle slenderer than that of her sister; which produced from Miss

Simmons the observation that there was not more difference than there should be for Miss Kate's somewhat superior height; and the judicially pronounced declaration, that "*It have* been considered, Miss Margaret, that Miss Kate's figure, specially a horseback, is the perfectest thing as ever was seen!"

"Don't talk nonsense, Simmons!" said Kate; "but just take two or three pins, and see if you can pin up the habit so as to make it fit Margaret's waist. There!" she continued, as the handy servant accomplished the task, "did anybody ever see a nicer figure for the saddle? Now the hat, Margaret. Just the least in the world on one side. That's it. Oh, you must ride. You do not know how the dress becomes you!"

"Yes, I think I look well in it!" said Margaret, admiring herself in a Psyche glass, as she spoke. "And it would be better, you know, in a habit made for me."

"And look, Margaret; I must teach you how to hold up your habit when you walk in it. Look here! You should gather it in your right hand thus, so as to let it fall in a graceful fold; do you understand?"

"Oh, yes; that is very easy," said Margaret, walking across the room, and catching the mode of doing so gracefully, with admirable tact and readiness. "If the riding were only as easy as

that! But Lady Farnleigh showed a *leetle* more of her boot in walking. I think one might venture just to let the instep be seen;" she continued, putting out, as she spoke, from under the heavy folds of the habit a lovely little slender foot in its exquisite Parisian *brodequin*.

"Oh you are beyond me, already, Margaret!" cried Kate, laughing; "I never dreamed of considering the matter so artistically. But certainly, it would be a pity to hide that foot of yours more than need be. Only, darling, that charming little French boot would hardly be the thing for our Sillshire riding, let alone walking."

"I can't bear a thick boot," said Margaret. "And Kate, don't you think that without being *trop hasardé*, one might put the hat just a *soupçon* more on the left side,.....so? There, that is charming! How well the black hat goes with the *mat* white of my complexion! Does it not, now?"

And in truth, the figure at which both the girls, with Simmons behind them, were gazing in the large Psyche, was as attractive an one as could well be imagined.

Just as they were thus engaged, having let the day run away till it was near dinner time, there came a tremendous thump at the door; which made Margaret jump as if she had been struck while it produced from Kate, to her sister's no

little dismay, a laughing, "Come in, Noll! Come in, and see what we are about!"

And in the next instant, the Squire, who had just returned from his shooting, was standing in the midst of all the varied display of finery which occupied every chair and other piece of furniture in the room.

"Why, girls, you are holding a regular rag-fair! What Margy...ret; is that you? I am glad to see that riding toggery makes part of your wardrobe. That is better luck than I looked for. And upon my word, you look very well in it.....very well!"

"It is my riding-habit, Noll. Margaret was only trying it on; does it not become her? She must get one without loss of time."

"Unluckily I have never learned to ride, Papa," said Margaret.

"Oh, we shall soon teach you here, my love. We'll make a horsewoman of you, never fear! I came up to tell you what I have been doing, girls. I asked Lady Farnleigh, you know, to bring her friend Captain Ellingham to dinner on Friday. Well, I thought it would be neighbourly to introduce him to some of the people at the same time. So I have asked the Falconers, father and son. I fell in with the old gentleman down at the Ivy bridge, looking to see if he could find any traces of the graves of some soldiers of the garrison of

Silverton Castle, that he says were buried there at the time of the civil wars. And I told Mat to ask my brother and sister-in-law. She won't come, of course. Mat is not returned yet; but we shall know at dinner whether the Doctor can come. And as I was coming home by Upper Weston Coppice I met Mr. Merriton, the new man at the Friary, and asked him and his sister."

"Why, we shall have quite a large party, Noll," said Kate. "Miss Immy will say that she has not notice enough to make due preparations."

"Stuff and nonsense! What preparations are needed, beyond having plenty of dinner? I thought it a good opportunity to bring the people together and make acquaintance with these new folks. They are friends of the Falconers; and he seems a very gentlemanlike sort of fellow."

The new people thus spoken of, were the owners, having quite recently become such—or rather, Mr. Merriton was the owner—of the small but exceedingly pretty and serviceable estate and mansion called the Friary, at Weston Friary. Arthur Merriton and his sister Emily had been the wards of the head of the firm who were Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne's London correspondents; and were the children of an English merchant, settled for many years in Sicily, by an Italian wife. They had been left orphans at an early age; and had been, together with the very

considerable fortune left by their father, under the care of the London banker since that time. It was only a year since Mr. Merriton had come of age. His sister was two years older, and they had recently come to live at the Friary, the purchase of which had been arranged and concluded on Mr. Merriton's behalf, by Mr. Falconer, of Silverton.

"How many does that make altogether?" asked Kate, intent on getting the subject into fit shape for presentation to the mind of Miss Immy.

"I have not counted noses," answered her father; "but it can't be such a large party after all."

"Let us see. We are five at home, two gentlemen and three ladies; and uncle Theophilus will make us up half a dozen, three and three. Lady Farnleigh and Captain Ellingham will make eight; and Mr. Merriton and his sister ten; and the gentlemen and ladies are still equal. But then come the two Mr. Falconers, and make us seven gentlemen to five ladies."

"And that will do very well. We shall be four old fellows to three youngsters; I and my brother, and Mat and old Falconer; and young Falconer, Merriton, who seems little more than a lad, and Captain Ellingham."

"Lady Farnleigh did not seem to speak of him as nearly so young a man," replied Kate; "he will be half way between you seniors and the young

men. She spoke of him more as a friend of her own standing."

"Well, her own standing is nothing so very venerable. But she mentioned the age of this Captain Ellingham. He is thirty; and Freddy Falconer is, I know, seven-and-twenty. So there is no such great difference."

"No," said Kate; "that is very little difference. Only one has always been used to look on Freddy Falconer in the light of a young man, and a Captain in His Majesty's Navy seems such a grave and staid sort of personage."

"Well, we shall see. But I protest against the mere count of years being considered to decide the question whether a man is old or not; for if that be the case, you will be making me out to be old myself, next! Well, I suppose it is pretty nearly time to go and dress for dinner."

Margaret, who had been apparently occupied during all this conversation between her father and Kate, with trying the effect of divers positions and modes of standing, as she continued to admire the becomingness of the riding-habit in the Psyche, had nevertheless lost no word of what had passed. And when the Squire left the room, she was engaged in meditating how far the words her sister had used in speaking of Mr. Frederick Falconer might be considered as corroboratory of the half-jesting accusation Lady Farnleigh had brought

against Kate, of being included in the number of those who were inclined to consider that young gentleman as a very desirable "*parti*."

"Here, then," she said, when her father was gone, "is another accession to your collection of Silverton beaux, according to what Papa says. Have you ever seen this Mr. Merriton, Kate?"

"No, never; neither him, nor his sister. But I had heard of them before. I fancy they are nice people. They are quite new-comers to Sillshire, and know nobody here but the Falconers."

"Do they live in Silverton?" asked Margaret.

"No, they have bought an estate at Weston Friary,—such a charming village down in the valley at the end of the watermeads, not more than a couple of miles above the town. One of our first excursions must be to Weston."

"What, to call on these people?"

"No, I meant to see the village, it is such a pretty place. But now it will be necessary, of course, to call on the new-comers; and we can do that too. The Friary is a sweetly pretty house and grounds."

"Is that the name of their place?"

"Yes. I believe it was a monastery once upon a time. If you want to win the heart of Uncle Theophilus or of old Mr. Falconer, on the spot, you have only to ask them to tell you all about it. Only they are quite sure to tell you different

stories; and you will mortally offend either of them, if you give credence to the story of the other."

"One must speak to them separately then," said Margaret, apparently with all seriousness. "But you said," she continued, "that it was an estate that Mr. Merriton had bought?"

"Yes, the estate is called the Friary estate from the name of the house. It is a small estate; but full of such pretty bits of country. It is quite celebrated for its beauty in the county."

"Then I suppose Mr. Merriton must be rich; or at least a man of independent property?"

"I suppose so," answered Kate; "but I have not heard any one say anything on the subject."

And then Margaret divested herself of the riding-habit, after a last long and wistful look in the glass, and inwardly-registered vow that she would allow no disagreeables to interfere with her learning to ride as quickly as possible; and the girls proceeded to dress for dinner. And that ceremony passed somewhat more pleasantly than it had done yesterday. Margaret delighted Mr. Mat by asking him if he thought he could, and kindly would, undertake the office of riding-master on her behalf; and much talk passed between them on the subject. Then there was talk about the dinner party on the day after the morrow. The Doctor, Mr. Mat brought word, would come.

But Lady Sempronia excused herself, as usual, on the plea of indifferent health. And then the excursion into Silvertown for the morrow was talked about and arranged. The Squire, who rarely was seen in Silvertown High street, except at times of Quarter Sessions, or other such-like occasions, excused himself; and Mr. Mat declared also, that if his services were not wanted, he had much to do at home; and none of his hearers were so unkind as to ask him what it was. Miss Immy, on the other hand, declared that it was absolutely necessary that she should go to Silvertown, even if she were to go alone, with a view to matters connected with the next day's dinner. It would be absolutely necessary, she said, to send a message down to Sillmouth, if they wanted a decent bit of fish; and even so the people made a favour of it. For of late years all the best fish was sent off to London, in a way that used not to be the case when Miss Immy was young, and which she seemed to think involved much tyranny and overbearing injustice on the part of the Londoners against the "Zillshire folk."

"Come, Miss Immy," said the Squire apologetically: "the Londoners never refuse to let me have the pick of their market for my cellar."

"But fish is not wine; and wine is not fish;" said Miss Immy, distinguishing and separately emphasizing the two propositions by a distinct

system, as it were, of little palsied shakes of the head applied to each of them. "And I should think, Mr. Lindisfarn, that you were the only person who had ever supposed them to be so," added the old lady with much triumph.

So it was arranged that the carriage should be ordered, and that the two young ladies should accompany Miss Immy, and should be deposited at the Doctor's house in the Close, so that the new-comer might make acquaintance with her relatives, and also with Silverton, to any such extent as opportunity might be found for doing, while Miss Immy was driving about the town, intent on her household cares.

CHAPTER VIII.

MARGARET'S DÉBUT IN THE CLOSE.

THOMAS TIBBS, the coachman at the Chase, held as a fundamental axiom, that any man as wanted to drive from the Chase to Silverton turnpike in less than an hour and twenty-five minutes, had not no business to sit behind a gentleman's horses. If called on to pursue the subject, he was wont to do so after the same fashion of dialectic that Miss Immy had used with regard to the fish and the wine. "A gen'elman's carriage," he would justly observe, "is not His Majesty's Mail; and His Majesty's Mail is not a gen'elman's carriage—least ways not a gen'elman's private carriage," he would add, to avoid the possibility of leading to any unfavourable conclusion as to the gentility of the first gentleman in Europe. "Whereby it's not the value of five minutes you has to look to, but the condition of your cattle;" said Thomas Tibbs. The hill up from the Ivy bridge over the Lindisfarn brook to the turnpike that stood just where the city wall had

once crossed the present road, was a very steep pitch; and upon the whole the hour and twenty-five minutes claimed for the work by Thomas Tibbs was not an unreasonable demand. His further unalterable allowance of five minutes from the Turnpike to the door of Dr. Lindisfarn's house in the Close may seem to have been more open to exception. But Thomas Tibbs, who would have looked down with intense contempt from the altitude of a superior civilization on the Celtic endeavour to hide inefficient poverty under false brag by "keeping a trot for the avenue," maintained that "any man who knew what horses was, knew the valley of bringing 'em in cool:" and nothing could tempt him to exceed the very gentlest amble, between the Silverton turnpike and the Canon's door.

From which circumstance it follows that, although the Lindisfarn ladies had bustled over their breakfast in a manner that suggested the idea of a departure for the Antipodes, and Miss Immy had descended to the breakfast-room with her round brown beaver hat and green veil on, and an immense parasol, and three or four packages in her hands; and had entered the room giving a string of directions to Benson the housekeeper, as she walked; notwithstanding all these efforts, the Cathedral service was over at Silverton, and Dr. Lindisfarn had returned to his study—it not being

a Litany day—before the carriage from the Chase reached the Close.

Miss Immy refused to alight at the Canon's door, alleging that the number of commissions she had to execute would leave her not a minute to spare between that time and three o'clock: at which hour it was arranged that they were to leave Silverton, in order to be in time for the Squire's dinner hour at the Chase,—five o'clock extended by special grace on occasion of family progresses to Silverton to half-past five, in consequence of its being every inch collar work, as Thomas Tibbs declared, from the Ivy bridge to the door of the Chase. The hour which Tibbs claimed as absolutely necessary for his horses to bait, Miss Immy purposed spending, as was her usual practice on similar occasions, with Miss Lasseron, the sister of a late Canon of Silverton.

It was perfectly true that Miss Lasseron was the very old friend, and almost the contemporary of Miss Immy;—true also that Miss Immy very much preferred the nice little dish of minced veal and tall ale-glass full of Miss Lasseron's home-brewed amber ale, with which her friend never failed to regale her when she needed a luncheon in Silverton, to the bit of stale cake and glass of sherry that the Lady Sempronia was wont to produce on similar occasions. Nevertheless, I suspect that Miss Immy's avoidance of the house

in the Close, whenever she could decently do so, was in great part due to the small sympathy that existed between her and the Lady Sempronia. The latter dared not say in Sillshire that Miss Imogene Lindisfarn was an uneducated and vulgar old woman. But few who knew her, could have had any doubt that such was pretty accurately a correct statement of her real opinion. Miss Imogene, on her side, certainly thought, and did dare to say to anybody who cared to know her mind on the subject, that Lady Sempronia was a feckless and washed-out fine lady, and very stingy to boot. And the Silvertown and Sillshire world were much inclined to accept and endorse Miss Immy's opinion. Yet as regarded the latter part of the accusation, it was hardly a fair one. The Sillshire world did not know as well as the Lady Sempronia, that all her stinginess did not avail to bring Canon Lindisfarn's account with Messrs. Falconer and Fishbourne to a satisfactory balance at the end of the year. And those who had a general knowledge of that fact, did not call it to mind on occasions when in justice to the lady they ought to have done so. It certainly was not Lady Sempronia's stinginess which induced her to drive out, on the rare occasions on which she went out at all, in a shabby old one-horse vehicle, which really made a fly from the Lindisfarn Arms look smart by comparison. And when Miss Piper

the milliner, who had her show-room over the shop of her brother the perfumer in the High-street, told ill-natured stories among her customers of the impossible feats she was required by Lady Sempronia to perform, in the way of producing accurate imitations of the new French fashions from materials that had already undergone more than one metamorphosis, it can hardly be doubted that the poor lady would have preferred ordering a new silk had the choice of doing so been open to her. It was all very well, as Lady Sempronia had been heard to say, for those to talk whose husbands cared for their families more than for stones and old bones, and all sorts of rubbish; and who were content with reading what other people had printed, instead of printing their own! And no doubt there was an amount of truth in these lamentations which ought to have obtained for them a greater degree of sympathy than was generally shown to Lady Sempronia. But she was not a popular person at Silverton. And all these things were "trials" to her ladyship. Life indeed seemed to shape itself to her feeling and mode of thought as one great and perpetual "trial;" and upon the whole she seemed generally to be getting the worst of it.

Kate and Margaret were shown into a long low drawing-room, looking from its three windows into the extremely pretty garden behind the house.

There was an old fashioned drab-coloured Brussels carpet on the floor, an old fashioned drab-coloured paper on the walls; and old fashioned drab moreen curtains bound with black velvet hung on each side of three windows. Nevertheless, it was, in right of the outlook into the garden and up the exquisitely-kept turf on the steep bank that ran up to a considerable height against the fragment of grey old city wall, and was topped by a terrace-walk running under the rose-clothed southern face of it,—in right, I say, of these advantages, Lady Sempronia's drawing-room was a pretty and pleasant room; though Kate used to say that it always used to make her feel afraid of speaking above her breath, when she came into it. The world, she said, seemed always asleep there.

There was nobody in the room when the two girls entered it; and the servant went to call his mistress.

"*Oh, que c'est triste!*" exclaimed Margaret, as she looked around. "I should die if I were made to inhabit such a room. *C'est d'une tristesse écrasante!*"

"And I am afraid poor Aunt Sempronia does not live a very gay life in it. Yet I do not dislike the room. Look at the garden. Can anything be conceived more peacefully lovely?" said Kate.

"*C'est à mourir d'ennui!*" said Margaret. The two girls were standing looking out of the window

with their backs to the door, as Margaret spoke; and had not heard the noiseless step of Lady Sempronia, as she crossed the room towards them. It was evident that she must have heard Margaret's criticism on her dwelling; and the utterer of it felt no little embarrassment at the consciousness that such must have been the case. But as it seemed, she could not have presented herself to her aunt in a manner more congenial to that lady's feelings.

Margaret blushed deeply, as she performed to Lady Sempronia one of her usual elaborate courtesies; while Kate spoke a few words of introduction. But her aunt, taking her kindly by the hand, said:

"Come and sit by me on this sofa, my love. It is a pleasure to find at least one member of the family who can sympathise with some, at all events, of the trials I am called on to struggle against. It is as you say, Margaret; *c'est à mourir d'ennui!* But, unfortunately, *ennui* kills slowly. It has done its work on me in the course of years, my dear. And yet Kate here bids me be cheerful—cheerful in such an atmosphere as this!"

Lady Sempronia certainly did look like one on whom *ennui*, or some such form of mental atrophy, had, as she said, done its work. Miss Immy called it looking "washed out;" and perhaps that phrase may give as good an idea of Lady Sempronia's appearance as her own more refined one. Hers

was a tall and remarkably slender figure, with a long face, the thinness of which was made yet thinner in appearance by two long corkscrew curls of very dull unshining looking light brown hair hanging on either side of it. She had a high-bridged Roman nose, and a tall narrow forehead, adorned by a "front," which life-weariness had caused to be so unartistically put on, that it hardly made any pretence of being other than it was.

"There can be no doubt that excess of quietude is often very trying to the spirits," replied Margaret sympathisingly.

"Trying!" exclaimed Lady Sempronia; "indeed you may say so! Few persons in my station of life have had so many trials as I have, my dear niece. But you, too, have had your trials. It must have been a very severe one to be called on to relinquish Paris to come and live in this remote solitude;—a very great trial. Do you feel the change very painfully?"

"The change is a very great one, certainly;" said Margaret, who remembering that her sister was present, though Lady Sempronia seemed to have forgotten it, could not respond as completely to her aunt's invitation to bemoan herself as she would have been happy to do under other circumstances.

"You will find, my dear, as life goes on, that it

is made up of a series of trials. Those who expect to find it otherwise," continued the melancholy lady, with a mild glance of reproach at Kate's face, which was most unsympathetically beaming with health and brightness and happiness,—"those who expect to find it otherwise, are but laying up for themselves a harvest of delusions and disappointments. There is to me no more melancholy sight than that of inexperienced youth, rushing forward, as it were, to meet the inevitable trials that await it, in utter unconsciousness of its fate."

"Why that is just what the poet says, Aunt!" cried Kate, with a smile entirely undimmed by any terror at the tremendous prospect before her.

"Alas ! unconscious of their doom
The little victims play.
No sense have they of ills to come ;
No care beyond to-day.'"

"I am glad to see that you are acquainted with the lines, my dear. They are very, very sad ones. You remember how the poet goes on :

'Yet see, how all around them wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black Misfortune's baleful train!'

The following stanzas are very instructive. And the whole poem—it is very short, too short, indeed

—would be exceedingly advantageous reading for a young person, every night before going to bed.”

“The last lines,” continued Kate, “are particularly impressive.

‘Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too quickly flies,
. . . where ignorance is bliss,
’Tis folly to be wise!’”

“Words uttered in the bitter irony of a broken heart,” said Lady Sempronia, with a profound sigh; “and which it would be folly indeed to take *au sérieux*! Tell me, my dear,” she added, turning to Margaret, “do you not feel the change from the scenes in which you passed your childhood, to the comparative solitude of your present home, very trying to your spirits?”

“I was certainly very happy in Paris; and Madame de Renneville and the Baron were very kind to me,” said Margaret; while a tear trembled in her fine eyes, gathered there not by the words which had been spoken, nor by any ideas called to her mind by them, so much as by the deep tragic tones and profoundly dispirited manner of her aunt. It was a tribute to Lady Sempronia’s sorrows and to her eloquence, to which that lady was keenly sensible; and she already began to feel that her newly discovered niece was a highly cultivated and charming girl, on whom she might

count for sympathy with her in her many sorrows.

Lady Sempronia was very fond of talking of these:—indeed she rarely spoke much on any other subject. But it was remarkable that she never spoke of the one great sorrow, which really was such as to justify her in considering her entire life to have been overshadowed by it. She never alluded to her lost son. That grief was too real, too sacred for idle talk. But of her poverty, her bodily ailments, the misbehaviour of the Canon in various ways, his absence of mind, his extravagance, his antiquarian tastes, of the troubles arising from the turpitude of all sorts of servants, she would discourse at any length.

“And now, my dear,” she said, after some further indulgence in her usual slipshod talk on the miseries of the world in general, and of her own lot in it in particular, “now I suppose you are anxious to make acquaintance with your uncle, the Canon. The meeting with a hitherto unknown relative may, in some exceptional cases, be the finding of a congenial and sympathetic heart. But it is far more likely to prove a severe trial.” Margaret could not help being struck, as her aunt spoke, with the justness of her observation; but she was not prepared for the candour of what was about to follow.

“It would not be right,” continued the Lady

Sempronia, "if I were to omit to warn you that the meeting with your uncle is likely to prove a severe trial."

"Dear Aunt," expostulated Kate, "I am sure Margaret will love Uncle Theophilus as much as we all do, when she gets to know him."

"My dear!" said Lady Sempronia, turning on her with some little sharpness, "it is my practice always, both for myself and for those who are dear to me, to prepare against disappointments. It is long since I have been disappointed in anything, and a certain amount of peace of mind may be thus attained. With regard to your uncle, my dear Margaret, we who do know him, as your sister says, are perfectly well aware of the many great and good qualities which he possesses; but it is nevertheless true, that your first introduction to him may prove a trial. Dr. Lindisfarn is a very learned man—a man of immense erudition! Nevertheless when he comes in to dinner with his surplice on, under the impression that he is entering the choir for morning service, it is a trial;—I confess that to me it is a trial. Your uncle has acquired the high esteem of the whole county, and has received the public thanks of the Chapter for his contributions in time, in knowledge, and in money, to the repair of the ceiling of the Cathedral transept. But when I reflect that a small portion of the money so spent would have supplied—among many other matters

—the new carpet, which you see, my dear, is so sadly needed for the drawing-room, it is, I do not deny it, a severe trial. When I speak to the Doctor upon any subject of domestic interest, and he answers me as if I were talking of things or people of five hundred years or more ago, I do own that it is a very painful trial. In short, my dear, it were weak to conceal from you that in all connected with Dr. Lindisfarn [a very deep and prolonged sigh inserted here] there are many and very grievous trials. And this being the case, it was, I think, my duty to warn you that you would find it *to be* the case. The duty of doing so has been a trial to me; but I would not shrink from it.”

“It has been very kind of you, Aunt; and I assure you that I am not insensible to it;” murmured Margaret.

“I suppose Uncle Theophilus has his trials too, for that matter,” said Kate.

“I have no reason to think Dr. Lindisfarn exempted from the common lot of humanity,” returned Lady Sempronia, with a certain degree of acidity in her manner, yet in a tone of extreme meekness, such as might be supposed the result of long suffering. “Shall we go to the study?” she asked; “Dr. Lindisfarn does not like to be called into the drawing-room.”

So the three ladies proceeded together to the Canon’s study. To do this they were obliged to

return from the drawing-room into the hall. For though the study adjoined the latter, there was no door of communication between them. It was a very long room, occupying the entire depth of the house, and lighted by one large bow window looking into the garden, and by a small window at the opposite end of it looking into the Close. The door opening into the hall was on the left hand of one looking towards the garden, and was near the Close end of the room, so that it was but a step from the hall-door to that of the study. The fire-place was on the opposite side of the room, not in the middle of the wall, but much nearer the garden end; and a double bookshelf, or rather two bookshelves back to back, stood out about two-thirds of the space across the room, so as to partially divide it into two rooms, of which that towards the garden was nearly twice as large as the other. Those dividing shelves abutted against the wall opposite the door, so that a person entering could see the entire length of the room; but one sitting near the fire could not see the door, nor be seen from it. The fire-place was merely an open hearth, prepared for burning wood, and furnished with a pair of antique-shaped andirons; for the Canon chose to burn exclusively wood in his study, despite the discontent and remonstrances of Lady Sempronia, who declared that the room could be well warmed with coal at very much less cost than it

was half warmed with wood. The question of the comparative expense had formed the subject of many a long dispute between them, till the Doctor, who in defence of his own position had drawn up an exceedingly learned and exhaustive memoir on the progressive difference between the cost of wood and coals from the earliest use of the latter fuel, had spoken on one occasion of the expediency of giving his monograph to the public, as one of the publications of the Sillshire Society. From that time forth the Lady Sempronia, who knew too well that the cost of printing the monograph would more than supply the study fire with wood to the end of the Doctor's days, had been silent on the subject.

The exceeding length of the room made the lowness of the ceiling, which the study shared with all the other rooms on the ground floor, seem still lower; and the quantity of heterogeneous articles with which the space was encumbered, increased the lumber-room like appearance which on first entering impressed itself on a visitor's mind.

Immediately in front of the door by the side of the window looking into the Close, there was a lay figure; on the shoulders of which were the Doctor's surplice, hood, and scarf, and on its head his trencher cap. This somewhat startling ecclesiastical presentation was a device of the Doctor's own

invention, the object of which was to prevent him, if possible, from forgetting to take off the above-mentioned canonicals when he returned from morning and evening service in the choir. Again and again it had occurred to him to proceed directly to whatever occupation in his study was uppermost in his mind—and had been so, it may be feared, during the hour spent in the choir—without divesting himself of any of these garments. And as the occupations were often of a nature involving contact with dusty tomes and dustier relics of antiquity; and, as even when this was not the case, the Doctor finding the folds of his surplice under his hand very convenient for the purpose, was apt to wipe either his pen or the dust with them, as the case might require,—considerable inconvenience arose from the neglect. At length it occurred to him, that if he had standing immediately before his eyes, as he entered his room, such a representative of himself, as it were, which he would be always accustomed to see at all other times of the day dressed in full canonicals, and which, when thus presenting itself to him naked, would seem to ask for its usual clothing, he could not fail to be reminded of what he had first to do, before returning to his studies. And the scheme had answered well, except as regarded the bands; and that small article of church costume mattered less. The only evil arising

from forgetfulness in this particular, was, that it sometimes happened that the Doctor came to his dinner table with two or even three pairs of bands around his neck, one falling over his coat collar behind, another under one of his ears, and a third in its proper position. For they would wriggle round his neck ; and as it never occurred to him to imagine that any such phenomenon could have taken place, when on going to church he found no bands in front, he would put on a pair without any inquiry respecting the disappearance of their predecessors.

The Doctor always wore gold spectacles ; and as his habits made it absolutely necessary for him to possess three or four pairs of these, a similarly monstrous hyper-development would occur in respect to them, as in the matter of the bands. For, when one pair had by accident, or by the action of his hand when raised to his brow in thought, been pushed up out of their proper place on to his forehead, he never thought of looking, or rather feeling for them there ; but forthwith put on a second pair. Lady Sempronia declared, that she had seen her husband with one pair on the top of his bald head, another across his forehead, and a third in their proper position ; and protested that the melancholy and monstrous sight had been a particularly severe trial to her.

The study was, like that of other gentlemen of similar tastes, crammed full of all sorts of queer

odds and ends, which were regarded with much aversion by the Lady Sempronia. But there was one peculiar feature in the contents of the room which stirred up her bile, and grieved her heart to a much greater degree. This was the long rows of the paper-bound volumes of the different Memoirs, which her lord and master had contributed to the Silverton Archæological Club. It must be admitted, unhappily, that the rows were very long. By the help of the cross-shelves, which have been mentioned as standing out across the room, the study afforded accommodation for a very considerable number of books. But alas! the inner side of these shelves, or that looking towards the garden window, was almost entirely occupied by those costly and learned publications. It is true that the mass of them diminished gradually; but the process was a very slow one. And the long rows of identically similar volumes were a sore offence to poor Lady Sempronia's eyes. The Doctor did his best to get rid of them; for no visitor, who could by any possibility be supposed to take any interest in such matters, left the house without a presentation copy of one or more of them. But at length it came to pass that the satisfactory disappearance of the volumes led to an alarmingly unsatisfactory result. The stock in hand of the Canon's Memoir on Panelled Ceilings in Coffer-work as Exemplified in Buildings of the

Norman and Ante-Norman Period, began to run so low, that visions of a second edition began to float before the author's mind, to the unspeakable horror of Lady Sempronia. It had been the most expensive of all the Doctor's publications, for coloured lithograph illustrations had been found absolutely necessary. And the first hint that the learned world would probably expect a second edition of that highly appreciated work, had been one of Lady Sempronia's severest trials. The rest of the hated volumes, of which in her unforeseeing ignorance she had watched the gradual disappearance with satisfaction, suddenly became valuable in her eyes; and she adopted every means of preserving and husbanding the precious remainder of them. She had never before condescended to know even the titles of any of the Canon's publications. But now, whenever there was any probability that the Doctor would offer any of his works to a visitor, Lady Sempronia would interpose with, "Not the Coffer-work Ceilings, Dr. Lindisfarn. You have only one copy left!" And in fact but one copy remained on the study shelves. For on the first appearance of the danger, the lady had gradually carried off to her secret bower, two or three copies at a time, all the remainder of the edition, to be produced, if need were, one at a time, and always under protest, so as to stave off the evil day when the Doctor

should be able to declare that the work was absolutely out of print.

The Canon, though shorter and smaller than his brother, had been a well-looking man in his day. He had a high delicately-formed nose, a particularly well-cut and finely-shaped mouth, and a classical outline of features generally. Though very bald, and limping a little in his gait, in consequence of a fall from a ladder in the cathedral, when he had been engaged in directing and superintending some restorations of his beloved church, he was still a very distinguished-looking man. He always wore a large quantity of snow-white but perfectly limp and unstarched muslin, wound round and round his throat, and a large prominent shirt-frill protruding between the sides of his black waistcoat. A black body-coat, very wide in the skirt, black breeches, black silk stockings, somewhat negligently drawn over very handsome legs, gold knee and shoe buckles, which Lady Sempronia in vain strove to induce him to discard in favour of the more modern fashion of shoe-ties, completed his costume.

Margaret was a little startled on entering the study to see a figure in full canonicals and trencher cap motionless in front of her; and gave a perceptible little jump.

"No, dear," said Kate, "that is not Uncle Theophilus. That is only Canon Lindisfarn. May

we come in, Uncle?" she continued; "I know you are in your old corner behind the books there. Aunt and I have brought Margaret to see you."

"Come in, Kate, come in!" said a voice from behind the screen of books. "You are always welcome, my dear. But who is the Margaret you speak of?"

"Why, your niece, to be sure," cried Kate, leading the way round the screen, while Lady Sempronius whispered to Margaret, as they followed; "I told you it would be a trial, my dear."

"Don't you remember that you have a niece just returned from Paris?" continued Kate.

"To be sure I do! to be sure I do.....now you mention it. Welcome to England, and welcome to Silverton, and welcome to Silverton Close, my dear! What a happiness it must be to you to find yourself at home once again."

"It is a great pleasure, sir, to become personally acquainted with relatives, whom I have already learnt to venerate," said Margaret.

"I can't think," said the Canon, after looking at Margaret in an earnest and yet wool-gathering sort of manner,— "I can't think for the life of me, who it is she reminds me of. There is some face in my memory that hers seems to recall to me."

"They say we Lindisfarns are all more or less alike," interposed Kate, fearing whither her uncle's remembrances might be leading him; "and all the

people up at the Chase declare that Margaret and I are as much alike as two peas."

"Then I am sure they do you great injustice, sister," said Margaret eagerly. "How can they compare your fresh-coloured face to my poor white cheeks? I do not know how I came by them. It is just as if they had coquettishly fashioned themselves to please the people they grew among. For the Parisians admire white faces and not red ones. But I am sure I envy Kate's roses."

"There are white roses and red roses," said the Canon, "and I'm sure I don't know that anybody ever yet decided that one was more beautiful than the other."

"Talking of roses, by the bye," said Kate, who did not like the turn the conversation was taking, "what about the cuttings you were to prepare for me, Aunt? Suppose you and I go and look after them in the garden, and leave my uncle and Margaret to complete their acquaintance."

Kate was desperately afraid that the Canon's half-recalled memories, which she had little doubt had been roused by a likeness between her sister and Julian, would stumble on, till they blundered on something which might throw Lady Sempronia into a fit of hysterics, and send her to bed for a week; and was anxious, therefore, to get her out of the danger. And her aunt, who never felt particularly comfortable or happy in the study,

yielded at once to Kate's lead, merely saying to the Doctor, as she left the room ;

"Not a copy of the Coffe-work Ceilings, Dr. Lindisfarn, remember you have but one copy left!"

"Lady Sempronia is reminding me," said the Canon, in reply to a look of inquiry from Margaret, when they were left alone together, "that I must not offer you a copy of one of my little works, which has been so successful with the public that it is nearly exhausted. But the caution can hardly be needed ; for it can scarcely be expected that a young lady should interest herself in matters of antiquarian research."

"Oh ! there you are wrong, Uncle," cried Margaret, who always was a far glibber talker in a *tête-a-tête*, be it with whom it might, than under any other circumstances. "And specially you do me wrong ; for I take particular interest in all such matters. *J'aime la rococo à la folie !*" she added, clasping her admirably gloved hands together, bending her graceful figure a little forwards, and throwing an expression of intense enthusiasm into her beautiful eyes.

The Doctor, though a competent reader of French, was by no means a sufficiently instructed student of French things and phrases to be aware of the amount of distance lying between a Parisian lady's love for "*rococo*," and a taste for antiquarian research. But he knew very well, that he had

never seen anything more lovely than his niece looked as she made her profession of admiration for his favourite studies.

"I really think," he said in the zeal of his delight at the prospect of such a disciple, "that the last copy of my dissertation on Coffin-work Ceilings could find no more worthy destination than the shelf which holds your own special books, my dear. The book is now a rare one; and will, I doubt not, be there in good company."

"Not for the world, Uncle, not for the world! I shall come here and ask you some day to lend me your own copy for a quiet hour in the garden. But I would not for any consideration carry off a copy which you will surely need to give to some great man of learning. Besides, what would Lady Sempronia say? But there was a subject about which I was very anxious to ask you; for I can get no information up at the Chase. Is it not true that the mansion called the Friary at Weston was once a monastery? I *should* so like to know all the history of it!"

"And I should so like to tell you," cried the Canon, in the greatest glee. "You are quite right, my dear girl. It is one of the most interesting places in the county! Indeed I have thought for some time past of making it the subject of a monograph."

Margaret had not the remotest conception of

the meaning of a "monograph;" nor was she aware how safely she might have simply avowed her unacquaintance with the word, without pleading guilty to any very disgraceful ignorance; but she thought she might say:

"Oh, that would be delightful, Uncle! But what I should like best of all, if it were possible, would be to visit the spot with you. You and I together, you know, so that you might explain everything to one."

"And why not? Nothing more easy! I have not yet made acquaintance, by the bye, with the new owners of the place."

"Oh, that you will do to-morrow, Uncle. Mr. and Miss Merriton are to dine with us. You will meet them, you know. And then I shall very soon afterwards come to claim your promise of a day at the Friary."

"And I shall be delighted to keep it. Perhaps if I decide on writing on the subject, you might assist me with your pencil. Do you draw my dear?"

"Yes, I have learnt. I can draw a little. I should be so glad to be permitted to be of use. To study, and be directed by you, Uncle, would be so delightful."

"And what could give me greater pleasure than to direct your studies? We will attack the Friary together. It really ought to be illustrated, the

more so that I am not unaware that there are sciolists in this very city of Silverton, who hold some most absurd notions respecting certain portions of the ancient buildings. Yes, yes, my dear, with my pen, and your pencil, we will attack the Friary together. To think of your having already cast your eye on the most interesting bit of antiquity in the county, you puss !”

And then Lady Sempronia and Kate came and tapped at the window from the garden ; and the former told Margaret to come and have some luncheon in the parlour. And the Doctor dismissed his newly found niece with the profound conviction that she was not only the flower of the family, but the most charming, the most highly gifted, and by far the most intelligent girl it had ever been his lot to meet with.

“Well ! how did you and Uncle get on together ?” asked Kate. “Did you make friends ?”

“I hope so,” said Margaret ; “as far as a learned man could with a very ignorant young girl. He was very kind to me.”

“Did he offer to give you any of his books ?” asked Lady Sempronia, well aware of the channel by which the Doctor’s kindness was wont to manifest itself.

“Yes, Aunt. He was generous enough to offer me the last copy of his memoir on Ceiling-work

Coffers. But of course, after what you had said, I would not let him do anything of the kind. What a pity it is that such an excellent man as my dear uncle should fail to recognise the good sense of abstaining from wasting his money on such things !”

And then the carriage came to the door with Miss Immy, precisely at three o'clock ; and that very punctual lady sent in a message to Lady Sempronia, regretting that the immense amount of business she had had to transact in Silverton had made it impossible for her to leave herself time enough to alight—setting forth the absolute necessity of being at the Chase and dressed for dinner in time, not to keep the Squire waiting beyond the half-hour of grace allowed them, and begging the young ladies to come out without delay.

So then there was a kissing bout, and Lady Sempronia turned to kiss Margaret a second time, as she was leaving the room, while Kate was already hurrying across the hall to the carriage, and as she pressed her hand, trusted that they should see much of each other—

“Perhaps the house in the Close, and such little distractions as Silverton could offer—dull enough though they generally were, God knew—might sometimes be a change from the profound seclusion and monotony of the Chase.”

And, "*Ah, ma tante ! Comme vous êtes bonne pour moi, vous !*"

And so upon the whole (putting out of the question, of course, the tender affection of her father and sister ;) Margaret's *début* at the house in the Close had been a more successful one than that at the Chase.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PARTY AT THE CHASE.

MISS IMMY considered "a trial" to be a matter inseparably connected with the Assizes, and in some less perfectly understood manner dependent on Quarter Sessions. She never used or understood the word in any other sense (unless as meaning simply an attempt); and in her own private opinion, uncommunicated to any human being, she attributed Lady Sempronia's constant use of the term to the shocking and fearful impression which had been made upon her especially weak mind (as Miss Immy considered it) by the idea of the thing, at the terrible time when it was a question whether her own son might not have to undergo the ordeal of it. Miss Immy had no idea that she herself had any trials; or she certainly might have considered it to be one, when on the next morning, the morning of the party, was made evident at breakfast that the Squire had entirely forgotten all about it.

“Would you be so kind, Mr. Mat, as to mention to Mr. Lindisfarn once every half hour during the day, that he has to entertain friends at dinner to-day, and that he will get no dinner before six o'clock?”

“I’ll try and remember it, Miss Immy, this time,” said the Squire, laughing; “and if I don’t, it will be my punishment to expect my dinner at five and have to wait an hour for it,—a penalty that might suffice for a worse crime!”

And then the Squire took his gun, and calling to the dogs to join him, was seen no more till he met his guests in the drawing-room.

Miss Immy had very many things on her mind, and was in a state of much bustle and business-like energy all day. She was wont very scornfully to repudiate the new-fangled heresy, which teaches that the genteel mistress of a family should disavow any labours of the kind, and be supposed to delegate all such cares to subordinate ministers—existing in the Olympus of the drawing-room in a very Epicurean and non-Providential condition of godship. She had been irritated by such affectations on the part of others—of Lady Sempronia especially—into the habit of making a special boast before her guests of the part she had personally taken in caring for their entertainment; and it was observable that on such occasions, she always spoke in her broadest Sillshire Doric.

Kate, on whom none of these cares fell, had her day at her disposition; and to Margaret's great surprise proposed to Mr. Mat a ride to Sillmouth. There was a fresh breeze blowing, and she should like, she said, a gallop on the sands to see the big waves rolling in. Mr. Mat was always ready for a ride with Kate; so Birdie was saddled, and away they went.

"Surely it is a bad day to choose for such a ride," said Margaret.

"Just the day made for it!" cried Kate. "I know our Sillshire coast; and I know what a tide there will be tumbling in with this wind."

"Yes, I dare say; but you will come back with your face as red as beetroot, and people coming here this evening! Besides, I wanted to consult you about a hundred things."

"Oh, my face must take its chance, as it always does. And we can talk as much as we like to-morrow. We shall have all the morning before going over to Wanstrow."

"To-morrow! but I wanted to talk about my dress for this evening," pouted Margaret.

"Your dress! but you have got such lots of beautiful things. Any one will do."

"Any one! That's very easily said. But it depends on so many things."

It was very natural that Kate, who was going to meet only old friends, with the exception of

Captain Ellingham and the Merritons, and who was going to do nothing but what she was perfectly well used to, should feel more at her ease about the event of the evening than Margaret, who was going to make her first appearance at an English dinner party among a roomful of strangers. But the "so many things" that Margaret spoke of included sundry considerations and speculations of a kind that had never entered the English-bred girl's philosophy.

"But I shall be home in plenty of time to dress," she said in answer to her sister's last remonstrance; "and then we can settle what dress you shall wear."

So Kate rode off; and Margaret was left to meditate on her evening "trials" in solitude, broken only by the not altogether sympathising companionship of Simmons.

Had it entered into Kate's head to imagine that the morning would appear tedious to Margaret, she would not have left her. But it was so much the habit of the family to go each one his own way, and she was so used to being left alone to her own morning occupations herself, that it never occurred to her that it was necessary to stay at home because her sister did.

Nor did it seem that her counsel was really needed in the matter of the dress; or at all events, was so urgently needed as to be waited

for; for when she returned from her ride she found the great question decided, and every article of Margaret's evening toilette carefully laid out on her bed.

Kate did return from her sea-side gallop with her face not only red but rough; for her ride had answered her expectations to the utmost; and not only the boisterous south-west wind, but the salt spray had also lashed her cheeks. And it needs a painful effort of impartial truthfulness in a chronicler who owns a very strong special liking for Kate Lindisfarn, to admit that this was not the only respect in which the advantage was with Margaret, when the two girls went down to the drawing-room. Margaret's dress was the production of a Parisian artist, and fitted her fine shape as smoothly and somewhat more tightly than her skin. Kate's, alas! was but the *chef-d'œuvre* of Miss Piper, the Silvertown milliner. It was a pretty light blue silk dress, a shade or two lighter than the wearer's eyes, which, whatever her complexion may have been, were decidedly none the worse for her ride. They danced, and laughed, and flashed with health, and good humour, and high spirits. Blue was Kate's favourite colour, and it always became her well. But Miss Piper's handiwork did not escape Margaret's criticism in more respects than one; and it must be admitted that the young lady was a very competent critic.

"What will become of me, if I am to wear dresses made by the person who made that?" cried she. "Why, it fits about as well as a sack, Kate, here under the arms. It makes your waist look thick, or rather gives you no waist at all! And you must admit that it is cut odiously round the shoulders."

"Poor Miss Piper!" said Kate laughing. "She thought that she surpassed herself when she turned out this dress; and I thought it a very pretty one myself. But I can see very well that it does not fit like yours. And then, you know, I have not such a slender waist as yours; we proved that by the riding-habit. And as for the shoulders, I suppose it is cut about as low as they are worn hereabouts. We are provincial folks, you know. But you may depend upon it, we are not so ignorant, any of us, as not to see how exquisitely dressed you are. I never saw such a fit. And how it becomes you!"

Margaret was in truth looking exceedingly lovely. She had selected a black silk dress; perhaps from having been led to think of the ivory whiteness of her own skin, in connexion with her prognostications of the effect of the morning's ride on her sister's. At all events the choice was a judicious one. Not only the complexion of the face, but the perfect creamy whiteness of the magnificent throat, and as much as could be

seen of the shoulders, was shown off to the utmost advantage by the dark folds of the material in juxtaposition with it. As before, Kate wore her beautiful hair in ringlets; while Margaret's somewhat darker locks were, quite unusually for Sillshire, bound tightly around her small classically shaped head, not only displaying to advantage the beauty of it, but adding in appearance to her height. Kate was in fact the taller of the two girls. But what with this difference of head-dress, what with her somewhat more slender figure, and what with the additional advantage given to this by the cut and admirable fitting of her dress, anybody who had seen the two otherwise than absolutely side by side, would have said that Margaret had the advantage. Kate wore white silk stockings and kid shoes; Margaret black silk, of that very fine and gauzy quality which allows a sufficiency of the whiteness of the skin beneath to shine through the thin covering to turn the black almost to grey; and black satin shoes. And here again, alas! she had the advantage over our Sillshire Kate. And men will be so stupid in these matters. I would lay a wager, that either Captain Ellingham, Fred Falconer, or Mr. Merri-ton, the latter especially—he was the youngest—would have said the next morning that Margaret had the prettier foot; whereas all that could have been said in justice, was that she had the prettier

shoe. In this matter Sillshire could not compete with Paris. And it may be possible that the active habits of Sillshire life had added something to the muscular development, and therefore to the thickness of the country-bred foot, which had done more walking, running, jumping, riding, swimming in its life than any score of Parisian young ladies' feet. At all events the exquisitely beautiful slenderness of the by no means short, but well-formed foot, and high arched instep, which showed itself beneath the folds of Margaret's black dress, was shown to the greatest possible advantage by the skill of the Parisian Melnotte of that day.

Upon the whole, the contrasted style of their dresses added so much to the real differences between the two girls, and the contrasted style of their manner added so much more, that no stranger would have guessed them to be sisters, much less twins. As to this latter matter of bearing, gait, and all the innumerable and indescribable little details which make up what is called manner, there was more room for difference of opinion. Every man admires a Parisian dress or shoe more than a Sillshire one. But some men—and not Sillshire men only—may prefer the Lindisfarn-bred to the *Chassée-d'Antin*-bred manner. Margaret herself, however, had no doubt at all upon this department of the question, any more than upon

the other. And her last final glance at the Psyche glass in her chamber, sent her downstairs by Kate's side in high good humour.

When they entered the drawing-room, they found Miss Immy and Mr. Mat, with Lady Farnleigh and Captain Ellingham. The Squire had not yet come into the room. There was a fire in the grate; for though it had been hitherto lovely September weather, the day had been boisterous and windy,—the first foretaste of autumn. Lady Farnleigh and Miss Immy were sitting near the fire, and discussing a method, said to be infallible, for keeping eggs fresh longer than any other way; and Miss Immy was declaring her conviction that a fresh-laid egg was a fresh-laid egg, and a stale egg a stale egg, despite all the cleverness and contrivances in the world. Mr. Mat and Captain Ellingham were talking in the embrasure of a window near the door. When the girls came in, however, and went to join the ladies on the rug before the fire, the two gentlemen came forward, and Captain Ellingham was presented by Lady Farnleigh to both the young ladies. There was not the slightest difference in her manner in either case; but she introduced the stranger first to Kate. And a slight shade passed over Margaret's heart, not over her face—*pas si bête!*—as the reflection occurred to her that Kate had no right to be treated as if she were the elder sister.

Margaret saw enough of the Captain with half a glance, however, to make up her mind at once, that as far as he was concerned, any little matter of this kind was of small importance to her. Knowing how poor a man Captain Ellingham was, it was quite a satisfaction to her—almost, one might say, a relief—to find that no amount of dangerous attractiveness had been thrown away upon him. And yet all women, and even all young girls, would not have been at all disposed to subscribe to Margaret's opinion on this point. Captain Ellingham was one of those men who seem to impersonate the beau-ideal of their calling. He looked exactly what he was, every inch a sailor. He was of middling height, very broad in the shoulders, with not an ounce of superfluous flesh on him. His coal-black hair and whiskers, of which he wore rather more than was at that time usual among landsmen, were already beginning to be slightly streaked with grey. His cheek was dark by nature, and bronzed by exposure to weather. The large good-humoured mouth, showing every time he smiled a set of magnificently regular teeth, was supported by a massive square chin, the fleshlessness of which, and of the jaw behind it, caused the lower edge of the latter to show an angle as clean and well-defined as the right angle of a square piece of iron; and it looked as hard and firm as that. But the eyes were the principal

feature of his face. They were large brown eyes, which when they looked anybody in the face without any reason for special expression, gave the impression that nothing could ever make them wink. When they were under the influence of any particular attitude of mind, it was strange how varied, and indeed how contradictory, the expression of them could be. Men said, his own men, the crew of his ship especially—that Captain Ellingham had the eye of a hawk. Others said, not men so much—that Captain Ellingham had an eye like a stag. For the rest, he had that sort of quick, decided manner, and that extra and superfluous amount of movement in his bearing, gait, and action, which is apt to characterise temperaments of great energy and nervous excitability. Upon the whole, one might say that Captain Ellingham was not, perhaps, a man to fall over head and ears in love with at first sight; but one with whom it would be very specially difficult to struggle out of love again, if once an adventurous heart should have advanced far enough to begin to feel the power of attraction.

Captain Ellingham, on his side, was one of those men particularly apt to fall in love, as it is called, at first sight; but not irretrievably so. There was too much depth of character, too much caution, too much shrewd common sense, and too strong an admiration for, and cleaving to, and

need of nobleness and goodness for that. So that, in point of fact, his tendency to love at first sight amounted to little more than great susceptibility to every form of female charm, joined to that proneness to poetise each manifestation of it into a conformity with his own ideal, which generally characterises such temperaments.

Lady Farnleigh's spirit, if any amount of "medium" power could cause it to look over the writer's shoulder as the words are formed by his pen—(would that it could do so! ah, would that it could!—) Lady Farnleigh's spirit, I say, would be very angry at the breach of confidence. But the fact was, that as they returned together in her ladyship's carriage to Wanstrow that night, Captain Ellingham admitted that of the two charming girls he had seen, he had been most struck by that exquisitely lovely sylph in black;—certainly the most beautiful creature he had ever seen! Whereupon that somewhat free-spoken lady had told him that he was a great goose, and knew about as much of women as she did of haulyards and marlingspikes.

Very short time, however, was allowed him for any quiet comparison of the two Lindisfarn lasses, before the rest of the guests began to arrive. The first comers were old Mr. Falconer and his son. The latter is already in some degree known to the reader. The first thing that struck one in the

former was his adherence to the then all but obsolete fashion of wearing a *queue*, or pigtail, and powder. He was a tall, florid, well-preserved old gentleman, somewhere between sixty and seventy, who having lived among the clergy of a cathedral city all his life, had acquired naturally in a great degree, and affected in a still greater, a clerical tone of manners and sentiments. Nothing pleased old Mr. Falconer more than to be mistaken for a clergyman.

Mr. Freddy, whose drawing-room get-up was in all respects on a par with that of his morning hours, and on a level with his reputation, after he had greeted with salutations accurately and gracefully adapted to the special fitness of each particular case, all his old acquaintances, was of course presented first to Margaret and afterwards to Captain Ellingham;—the first by Kate, with a very gracious “My sister, Mr. Falconer. Your Parisian reminiscences (Mr. Freddy had spent a winter in Paris) will make you seem almost more like an old acquaintance than any other of her Sillshire friends.” The other introduction was performed less graciously by Lady Farnleigh, as thus:—“Mr. Falconer, the Honourable Mr. Ellingham, in command of Her Majesty’s Revenue Cutter, the *Petrel*, on the Sillmouth station.”

Lady Farnleigh always called Lieutenant Ellingham Captain, like all the rest of the world. I do

not know why she chose not to do so on this occasion; and I suppose that Freddy Falconer could not have told why, either. But he observed it; and hated Lady Farnleigh for it more than he did before. It was because he hated her, and not, to do him justice, from any vulgar reverence for her superior rank, that his bow to her had been markedly lower than to any other person in the room.

Next arrived Dr. Theophilus Lindisfarn, bringing with him, not indeed the precious memoir on Coffer-work Ceilings, but another, on "The Course and Traces of the Ancient City Walls of Silverton," as an offering to Margaret; the ceremonious presentation of which before the assembled company, and the consequent pouncing on her by old Mr. Falconer, not a little disgusted that sylph-like creature, and wreaked on her some measure of punishment for the false pretences which had brought it upon her. She had reason to suspect, too, that there was more of the same sort of annoyance in store for her. For the Canon had entered the room bearing in his hands a carefully packed and sealed brown-paper parcel, looking very much like a brick in size and shape, which he had carefully deposited on a side-table, saying with sundry winks and nods and mysterious smiles, that there was something for their amusement in the evening, which he believed some, at least, of those present

(with a very flatteringly meaning look at Margaret) would appreciate.

Then came in the Squire, with a rush, and a circular fire of apologies.

"A thousand pardons, Lady Farnleigh! You have tolerated my ways so long that I hope you will bear with me a little longer and give up all hope of seeing them mended. How do, Falconer? I am not absolutely unpunctual though. It is not six o'clock yet! Wants two minutes!"

"And a half, Mr. Lindisfarn!" said the old banker, in a comforting, encouraging sort of tone, as he consulted his chronometer.

"Thank you, Falconer. And a half! Who calls *that* not being in time? How do, brother? How is Lady Sempronia? Not equal to the trial of coming up to the Chase, eh?"

And then the Squire was introduced to Captain Ellingham—duly called so this time—by Lady Farnleigh: and welcomed him to the Chase and to Sillshire with a charming mixture of high-bred courtesy and friendly cordiality.

"And now, Mat, ring the bell, and tell them that they may let us have dinner, there's a good fellow. You must be all half-starved."

"But we are not all here, Mr. Lindisfarn," said Miss Immy. "We are expecting Mr. Merriton and his sister from the Friary, Lady Farnleigh. Mr. Lin-

disfarn asked them himself; and now he has forgotten all about it !”

“ Bless me, so I had ! Don’t tell of me, anybody ! But they ought to have been here by this time. I hope they don’t mean to bring London ways into Sillshire, and understand one to mean seven when one says six.”

“ Our clocks are too fast, Mr. Lindisfarn. I told you so the other day,” pleaded Miss Immy.

“ Not if they make it now only two minutes past six,” said Mr. Falconer, again consulting his infallible watch.

“ Not a bit of it,” said the Squire ; “ and perhaps the best way of showing them that six means six in Sillshire would be to go to dinner.”

But the Squire was persuaded to allow a little law on the score of the defaulters being strangers, and this the first time of offending. And happily a carriage was heard crunching the gravel outside the drawing-room windows before another ten minutes had passed,—which, however long they may have seemed to the seniors of the party, passed quickly enough with some of the others.

And then Mr. Merriton and Miss Merriton were announced. They were entire strangers to everybody in the room except the Falconers, and except in so far as a casual meeting had introduced Mr. Merriton to Mr. Lindisfarn. And there was con-

sequently a little excitement of expectation among the party assembled, to see what the new comers into the county were like. And in the next instant it was recognized by all present, that they were at all events remarkable-looking people.

Arthur Merriton, though a smaller and slighter man than either Captain Ellingham or Fred Falconer, would have been thought by many a more remarkably handsome man than either. He would probably have been more generally thought so in England than among his mother's countrymen, where the peculiar type of his beauty is much more common. Fred Falconer's brown locks and carnation-coloured cheeks would have attracted more admiring eyes among the beauties of the *Conca d'oro* and the carefully-blinded windows of Palermo, than the raven's-wing curls, the brilliant dark eyes, and the thin transparent-looking sallow cheeks, and finely formed but yellow-white brow of the son of a Sicilian mother. In person and figure he was delicately and slenderly made, with small and well-shaped hands and feet. His manner was unexceptionably gentlemanlike; but there was a nervousness about it that seemed half excitability and half shyness, as he went through the ordeal of being presented to the various individuals of his new neighbourhood.

And this peculiarity of manner was yet more marked in the case of his sister. She was very

small, moreover, and really fairy-like in figure, which increased the effect of her shrinking timidity and nervousness of manner. Her little figure, in its almost miniature proportions, was exquisitely perfect, but the face had peculiarities which prevented it from being beautiful. The large fair forehead, which seemed first to attract anybody who saw Miss Merriton for the first time, was too large, and too square, and too prominent for the small face. The eyes had also the rare defect of being too large. But perhaps their size alone would not have seemed a fault, if they had not also been too prominent, and what the French call *à fleur de tête*. The other features of the face were good and delicate. Exceeding delicacy indeed, was the prominent and paramount characteristic of the entire face and figure. The hair was most remarkably abundant, and beautiful in quality, and as black as night. The whole face, except the lips, was entirely colourless.

The ladies and the young men had had time to note all this; and the old men had had time to think to themselves, "What a very strange-looking little body!" when the dinner-bell at length rang.

Mr. Lindisfarn gave his arm to Lady Farnleigh; Mr. Falconer took Miss Immy; Dr. Theophilus seized on Margaret, to her exceeding great disgust, making her feel as though she should burst into

tears amid the sweet smiles with which she looked up into his face, and pretended to coax him, as they walked to the dining-room, to tell her what was inside the brown-paper parcel; Captain Ellingham's character of stranger, as well as his rank, secured him Kate's arm; Freddy Falconer had Miss Merriton under his care; and so with Mr. Merriton and Mr. Mat bringing up the rear, they went to dinner.

END OF PART III.

Part Fourth.

CHAPTER X.

AT DINNER, AND AFTERWARDS.

IT was somewhat contrary to rule ; but the head of the table at the Chase was always occupied by Miss Immy. It was so for that good old conservative reason, that it always had been so from time immemorial. And the arrangement was a good one under the circumstances on one account at all events, that it obviated any difficulty as to the question to which of the twin Lindisfarn lasses should be assigned that post of honour. So Miss Immy sat at the top of the table, with the Canon on her right and the old banker on her left hand, exactly as she had done on many a previous occasion. And next to Dr. Lindisfarn of course sat Margaret. On the right hand of the Squire was Lady Farnleigh and opposite to her Miss Merriton, with Fred Falconer by her side. One place therefore, remained vacant between him and

the stream, and were not visible from any part of the city.

Indeed the house was not visible, or scarcely at all visible, from the village on the opposite side of the stream, it was so completely embowered in trees; and in one direction partially hidden by a jutting limestone cliff, which had been evidently, even to non-geological eyes, the cause of the sudden change of direction in the river's course at Weston. On the Lindisfarn and Silverton side of the river the colour of the soil was red; but on the Wanstrow side the limestone, which seemed to form the substructure, and to constitute the prevailing ingredient in the surface soil of the district, gave that side of the country a paler, greyer, less rich and less picturesque look than that for which the Lindisfarn side was so remarkable. The Wanstrow side was also much more sparsely wooded. But these remarks, which apply to all that district on the left bank of the river as soon as ever the valley of the Sill is left and the upper ground reached, are not applicable to the valley itself, to Weston, or to the Friary grounds.

The limestone cliff, which has been mentioned, and which just at that turning point of the stream has been denuded by the action of the river, and rises to about a hundred and fifty feet in height, is there a feature of very considerable beauty in the landscape. It is entirely and most richly

covered with ivy and creeping plants of many kinds, hanging in great festoons, and which, availing themselves of every projection or inequality in the face of the rock to mass themselves around it, make it the savings bank for a gradually and slowly increasing treasure of gathered soil, and then root themselves afresh for a new start in the hoard thus collected. Close at the foot of the cliff runs the river, which, as soon as ever it has got round it, slackens its speed, widens its course, and having passed its tussle with that hard limestone opponent, goes more lazily, quietly, and smilingly, to the peaceful work of irrigating the watermeads.

There are no watermeads above the bend in the river, and the limestone cliff. The character of the upper part of the valley is a different one. And I have sometimes felt inclined to regret that there is no view of the two-mile vista of watermeadows with Silverton at the end of them, from the Friary. The cliff, which shuts out this view, is in itself a great beauty; and one cannot have everything. Above Weston the tillage comes down nearer to the river, on the Lindisfarn side, leaving only a narrow strip of meadow, which is not watermead, but pasture land. On the Wanstrow side—the side on which the Friary is—the same limestone formation, though not rising to the same height, nor rising with the same degree of

precipitousness, as it does to form the cliff, shuts in the valley for a few miles, making the rise from it exceedingly steep. On this side the space of pasture ground between the river and this rapid rise is wider. This was the home farm of the old monastery, and now forms the park attached to the residence. The high bank, which has been described as shutting this ground in, and which is in fact the prolongation of the limestone cliff that a little lower down turns the river, is entirely covered with thick wood;—not with such magnificent forest as clothes the top of Lindisfarn brow; but with trees of very respectable bulk and growth, amply sufficient to shut in the Friary park with a very beautiful boundary, and to exempt it entirely from that somewhat colder and bleaker look, which the country assumes as soon as the valley has been left, and the Wanstrow upper grounds approached.

Mr. Merriton's way from the Friary to Wanstrow crossed the Sill twice at starting. There is indeed a road which climbs the bank that has just been described, piercing the coppice which covers it. But it is a mere cart lane, and exceedingly steep. The cliff which has been so often mentioned opposes an insuperable barrier to all progress down the valley on the Friary side of the stream, so that it is necessary for any one who would go otherwise than on two legs or on four from the Friary to the upper country behind the bank and the woods, and

the cliff which hem it in, first to cross the Sill by a bridge which is the private property of the owner of the Friary, and then, after passing through the village, to re-cross it by the bridge which has been mentioned in a former chapter as forming a part of the pleasanter though longer of the two routes between Wanstrow and Lindisfarn Chase. On the lower side of the cliff, which shuts off the upper from the lower valley of the Sill,—on the side of the watermeads and off Silverton, that is to say,—the land rises from the river to the Wanstrow high grounds much more gradually.

By this road therefore Mr. Merriton proceeded in his phaeton, lolling comfortably back in one corner of the luxurious vehicle, but occupied more with thinking about how and what he should say to Lady Farnleigh, than with enjoying the beauty of his drive.

This became less as he left the valley of the Sill behind him, and climbed to the more open down-like region of the limestone hills. The Wanstrow farms were well-cultivated, and there was much to gladden the eye of an agriculturist in the district through which the road passed. But it not only looked but felt bleaker as the upper ground was reached, and Mr. Merriton with a shiver put on a cloak which had been lying on the seat beside him.

It was almost all, more or less, collar work from

the bridge over the Sill, to the lodge gates of Wanstrow Manor, a distance of about five miles. The park in which the house stands is of considerable extent, and not altogether devoid of fine timber in widely scattered groups. But it is very different from the richly wooded country on the other side of the valley around Lindisfarn. Immediately behind the house, which is situated on the highest swell of the open down-like hill, there is rather more wood, serving to give it a little of the shelter it so much needs, from the north. But it is little more than a large clump of elms. The house is a modern one, of very considerable pretensions, and containing far more accommodation than its present single inhabitant needed or could occupy. But the only special beauty or recommendation belonging to it is its southward view of the coast and the sea. The village and little port of Sillmouth are visible from it, as well as a considerable extent of the coast-line on the further or Silverton side of the estuary, comprising those sands over which Kate had had her gallop on the day of the dinner party at the Chase. The shore on the other or Wanstrow side cannot be seen from the house, because though in fact nearer to it as the crow flies, it is hidden under the limestone cliffs which rise from the shore to the eastward of Sillmouth. The sea-view from the house beyond, and to the westward of that little port, is a distant

one; but not too much so for it to be possible to see the white line of the breakers as they tumble in on the sands at low water, and on a black seaweed-mottled line of low rocks when the tide is at its highest.

Lady Farnleigh was mostly Kate's companion in her rides on the Sillmouth sands; but she used to say, that on occasions when she was not so, she could equally well see all that her goddaughter was doing from her drawing-room windows, by the aid of a good telescope.

The sea is visible from the road through Wanstrow Park for a mile or so before the house is reached; and Mr. Merriton, whose Italian-grown nerves were very quickly made sensible that it could be felt as soon as seen, drew his cloak closer about him, as he congratulated himself on the very remarkable difference of climate between the snugger of the Friary and the magnificence of Wanstrow Manor.

There was a garden on the west side of the house which was in part sheltered by it, and which partook of the protection afforded by the high trees behind it. And Lady Farnleigh used to do her best to make it pretty and fragrant; but she declared that it was a pursuit of horticulture under difficulties which were almost too discouraging; and often, when comparing the gardens at the Chase with her own infelicitous attempts,

would threaten to give up the struggle altogether, and depend wholly for her flowers on supplies from Lindisfarn.

She was in this garden, lamenting the mischief that had been caused by the high wind of the day before, and trying to devise with the gardener new means of shelter for some of her more delicate favourites, when Mr. Merriton arrived. He was shown into the drawing-room; and the servant, finding that her Ladyship was not there, preceded him through the open window into the garden.

"How kind of you," she said, after they had greeted each other, "to come up out of your happy valley to visit these inhospitable mountains! Look what the storm of yesterday has done; and at the Friary I dare say you hardly felt it at all. Our friends at Lindisfarn hear the wind up in the woods above them just enough to make them rejoice in the comfort of their sheltered position. You at the Friary neither feel nor hear it. But here we are in a different climate. Look at my poor geraniums!"

"Even to-day I felt the wind sharp enough as I drove through the Park. But at all events, Lady Farnleigh, you have the compensation of a magnificent view! Really the position of the house is a very fine one. The Park seems to extend nearly—or quite does it?—to the coast."

"Yes, I am monarch of all I survey up here (except the sea by the bye,) and my right there is none to dispute, except this terrible south-west wind: and Captain Ellingham says we are going to have more of it."

"*Raison de plus* that you should kindly accede to a request I bring from my sister, that you will join our friends at the Chase in passing a day at the Friary. My sister would have accompanied me to wait on your Ladyship, but she is very delicate, unhappily, and was really afraid of the drive this morning. Perhaps you will kindly accord her an invalid's privilege, and take the will for the deed."

"By no means let Miss Merriton come up here as long as this wind is blowing. I shall be delighted to see her, as soon as I can say, Come! without the fear of exposing her to the climate, which is, joking apart, as different from that of your valley as the north of England is from the south. I shall have great pleasure in coming down to the Friary, I am sure."

"It seems that Dr. Lindisfarn had purposed bringing Miss Margaret, who takes an interest in such things, to the Friary to explain to her all about the old monastery, you know, and the traces of the ancient building which yet remain."

"Miss Margaret takes an interest in such studies, does she?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Merriton quite innocently; "she was speaking to me about it at dinner yesterday, and I intended asking the Doctor after dinner; but then we were all occupied with other things, and I had no opportunity. And then Emily and I thought it would be much pleasanter if we could induce the others of the party to join in the scheme, and share the benefit of the Doctor's explanations."

"Delightful! I shall like it above all things. We will have a regular *matinée archéologique*!"

"I hoped to have found Captain Ellingham here, that I might have persuaded him to join us."

"He is gone down to Sillmouth to look after his ship. He will be here to dinner this evening, and I shall have much pleasure in conveying your invitation to him. But when is it to be?"

"Well, any day that would be most convenient to all of us. Perhaps, as he is the only one who is likely to have avocations that might absolutely make any day impossible to him, it would be as well to consult him first on that head."

"You are very kind; and I am sure he will feel it so."

"Would you kindly undertake then to fix a day with him? It is a pity I did not find him, though; for I meant to have returned through Silverton, and fixed the day with the rest of the party; but I shall not know what day to tell them."

"I'll tell you, Mr. Merriton, what I can do for you, which would facilitate matters. I had intended to have asked all our little circle to spend a day with me up here. And I too thought I had better make sure of Captain Ellingham for the same reason that you have given. And we fixed this morning on next Wednesday. Now I will give up Wednesday to you; so you will be sure of Ellingham for that day. And it will be better too for all concerned to come to me when this terrible wind shall have changed. If that will suit you, you are welcome to Wednesday."

"How very kind of you! Yes, that would suit us perfectly. Will you then kindly charge yourself with my message to Captain Ellingham? We hope to see him on Wednesday, and would have fixed some other day, if you had not kindly given me the means of knowing that that day would suit him."

"With pleasure; and I am sure he will have great pleasure in coming to you."

"We ought not to be later than one o'clock. There are plenty of old holes and corners to look into. There is a queer place at the further end of the park by the river side, which they call the Sill-grotto, and which they say was once a chapel. That will have to be visited, I suppose?"

"Of course it will. Dr. Lindisfarn will not let you off a single bit of old wall, or a single frag-

ment of old tradition about the place. No; one o'clock will not be too early, if the Doctor is to be allowed a fair course and no favour."

"Let it stand for one then. I am so much obliged to you, Lady Farnleigh."

And then Mr. Merriton got into his carriage and drove to Silverton. His purpose had been to call first on the Canon, as the first idea of the party had in some sort originated with him. But it was the hour of the afternoon Cathedral service when he arrived in the city, and the Doctor was in church.

So he went first to the banker's house in the immediate neighbourhood of the Close; and there, banking hours being over, he found the old gentleman in his learned looking library, solacing himself after the labours of the ledger with more liberal studies.

"Can't well be with you by one," said Mr. Falconer, when he had heard his visitor's errand. "Business first, you know, and pleasure afterwards. I can get away, perhaps, in time to be with you by three. Fred will not fail you at the earlier hour; not a doubt of it, bearing in mind the attractions you hold out to him! He has ridden over to Lindisfarn now. I will give him your invitation, and think I may venture to say that he will be only too happy to accept it."

"You are intimate with the family at the Chase,

I believe, Mr. Falconer?" asked Mr. Merriton thoughtfully.

"Oh, of course! Naturally so. We have been life-long neighbours, and that in a country neighbourhood makes a tie that it does not always in cities. Fred and Kate Lindisfarn have grown up from childhood together. And naturally enough they are very great friends;" said the old banker, looking up into his guest's face with a knowing glance and smile, which were intended to insinuate what he did not venture to assert in words. "That is all as might naturally be expected, you know," he continued; "and I think I may venture to promise you that when I tell Fred who the members of your party are, he will be punctual enough in waiting on you."

Mr. Merriton was much too young and too guileless a man to be able to conceal from the shrewd eye of the old banker the annoyance that the impressions thus conveyed to him inflicted on him. The old man saw the state of the case perfectly well. "Oh! that's it, is it?" he said to himself. "The more necessary to let him understand that Miss Kate is not destined to be his. It will be as well to give Fred a hint, too."

"Well," said the young man somewhat sadly, "I must go and do the rest of my errand in Silvertown. I have to ask Dr. Lindisfarn. And oh, by the bye! you can tell me, Mr. Falconer;

ought I to ask Lady Sempronia? Does she ever go out?"

"Ah.....h! You are going to ask the Doctor, are you? Yes, naturally—naturally; of course you would. You can't well do otherwise."

"Oh, I had no thought of leaving him out; it was Lady Sempronia that I was in doubt about. The whole idea of the thing began with the Doctor, I may say. He is to give us an explanation of all the history and antiquities of the old place!"

"Ah! I see. I see it all. Yes; he will give you the history, never fear; all after his own fashion too!"

"I thought you and Dr. Lindisfarn were great friends?" said Mr. Merriton innocently, and much surprised at the spitefulness of the old banker's manner.

"Friends! Dr. Lindisfarn and I? To be sure we are,—very old friends. I have a very great regard for Canon Lindisfarn, he is a most worthy man. But that does not blind me to the monstrosity of the errors his wrong-headedness and obstinacy often run him into in matters of archaeological science. Now as regards the history—the extremely interesting history of your property of the Friary!.....It is sad,—really now quite sad, to think of the number of blunders that he will circulate through all the county by the means of

your party next Wednesday. For these things spread, my dear sir! They are repeated. False notions are propagated. They run under-ground like couch-grass. They become traditional. And he will have it all his own way!.....I'll tell you what, my dear sir, I must be there! I must manage to be with you somehow by one o'clock. I'll not be late, my dear Mr. Merriton. You may count on me."

"So much the better. But about Lady Sempronia?" said Mr. Merriton.

"Oh, ask her, by all means. She goes out very little, and will probably not come; but you can ask her, you know. She is a poor inoffensive, invalid woman, but I have known her uncommonly shrewd sometimes in seeing through some of her husband's fallacies, when more learned people have been led astray by them. She is no fool, is Lady Sempronia. Ask her by all means."

So Mr. Merriton stepped across to the Canon's house—the distance was too small to make it worth while for him to get into his carriage,—devoutly wishing that Mr. Frederick Falconer was resting after life's fitful fever in any vault of the old church, beneath the shadow of which he was walking *à son choix*, and cursing the provoking impossibility of not asking him to join the party at the Friary.

The Canon had just returned from the afternoon

service, and had gone into the study. Mr. Merriton was shown into that room, and found the doctor engaged in transferring his canonicals from his own shoulders to those of his wooden representative.

“Ah, Mr. Merriton! how are you? Come in, come in! This is a contrivance of mine to prevent me from forgetting to take off my surplice, which I otherwise was apt to do!”

“Ah, having your head full of more important things, Dr. Lindisfarn! Yes, I can understand that. I came to speak to you about the visit which Miss Margaret Lindisfarn tells me you were good enough to purpose making with her to my house.”

“Aha! the little puss is anxious for the treat, is she? You would be surprised, Mr. Merriton, at the interest—the intelligent interest, I may say; though she is my own niece—that that young girl takes in pursuits and studies which some frivolous minds are apt to consider dry. Yes, I had proposed asking your permission to bring Miss Margaret to the Friary, for the purpose of illustrating to her on the spot the very interesting history of the house.”

“And when she mentioned the project to me it struck me and my sister that it would be a great pity not to give others of our friends an opportunity of profiting by the occasion; and we have asked

Lady Farnleigh and the rest of the party at the Chase to come to us next Wednesday. May we hope to see you on that day, and will one o'clock be too early?"

"No, you are very good, Wednesday will suit me very well. There is the afternoon service at the Cathedral, to be sure;—but in such a case..... that can be managed. Do you expect all the party at the Chase?"

"I hope so. I have only secured Lady Farnleigh, Captain Ellingham, the Falconers, and yourself. I will go up to them at the Chase to-morrow."

"Falconer will not be able to come to you at one o'clock, you know. He cannot get away from business so early; and perhaps, between ourselves, that is just as well. The best fellow in the world, Falconer! A good friendly man. But he has a mania for meddling with matters that are quite *ultra crepidam*. A most excellent man of business! But *optat ephippia bos piger!* you understand, Mr. Merriton. And my friend Falconer does not show himself to advantage in the *ephippia!* Ay, ay! You may depend on it I'll be punctual at one. And.....under all the circumstances it would be very desirable that we should all be punctual at that hour. Don't you see, Mr. Merriton?"

Mr. Merriton thought that he *did* see; although he had not the remotest idea what place or thing or

circumstance that *ephippia* was, in which Mr. Falconer was said not to shine. Was the *ephippia* perhaps another name for the Friary? He thought he saw, too, that it was best to say nothing of Mr. Falconer's determination to meet his enemy on the ground at all costs. So he merely answered:

"I had hoped to have the honour of being presented to Lady Sempronia, and to have persuaded her to join our party."

"Her ladyship, I grieve to say, is very much of an invalid. She will be most happy, however, to make acquaintance with you and Miss Merriton. But I fear she would hardly be able to see you now; and I do not think that there is much chance of her feeling well enough to join your party on Wednesday. I will give her your kind message, however."

"And pray say that were it not that my sister is also much of an invalid, she would have returned Lady Sempronia's card in person instead of deputing me to do so. She hopes, however, to be able to come into Silverton in the beginning of next week; and will then wait on Lady Sempronia."

And then Mr. Merriton drove back by the road along the edge of the water meadows to the Friary, disconsolately meditating on what he had heard from Mr. Falconer respecting his sons' intimacy at the Chase. For Mr. Merriton had

brought away with him thence a very severe wound; and *hærit lateri letalis arundo!*"

"Well Arthur!" said Miss Merriton as he entered the drawing-room at the Friary ready for dinner, "what have you done? Has anything gone amiss? You seem out of spirits."

"The people are all very civil. Lady Farnleigh was especially so. To prevent any *pasticcio* about fixing the day, she gave up, or put off rather, a party at her own house for next Wednesday, giving up that day to us. So it is fixed for Wednesday, and to-morrow I will go up to the Chase. All the rest have accepted."

"But what is it that has vexed you, Arthur? for I can see that something has."

"No! its your fancy. All the people seem inclined to be very kind. There's nothing amiss, that I know of."

"I am sure something has annoyed you, Arthur," persisted his sister, looking him in the face; "tell me what it is!"

"I do not know why I should look annoyed, I am sure. I might look surprised; for I did hear something that surprised me in Silverton."

"What about?" asked his sister.

"Oh, nothing that concerns us at all. It seems that Falconer and Miss Kate Lindisfarn are to make a match of it; that is all. And I confess it does seem to me that he is not half good enough

for her. I think I never saw a girl who made so strong an impression on me."

If Merriton had not been so much engrossed by his own emotions as to be rendered for the time unobservant of those of others, he might have been struck by the fact that his communication produced a somewhat stronger effect upon his gentle sister than appeared wholly attributable to her sisterly interest in his feelings. A sudden and deep flush passed over her delicate pale face, leaving it the next instant a shade paler perhaps than it had been before. She only said, however, after a few moment's pause, during which she succeeded in recovering her composure, or at least the appearance of it:

"But how did you hear it, Arthur? Remember, a great deal of groundless nonsense is apt to be talked on such matters; and it is very unlikely that anything should be really known on the subject unless they are absolutely engaged to each other.....I do not believe that is the case."

"Engaged! No, I don't suppose they are engaged; or the fact would be simply stated."

"What did you hear then, and from whom?"

"From old Falconer, when I invited him and his son to come here on Wednesday."

"What did he say?"

"Well, upon my word, I hardly know what he said. But he gave me the impression that it was

a sort of understood thing that his son and Miss Lindisfarn were to make a match of it."

"Miss Kate Lindisfarn?"

"Yes, Miss Kate Lindisfarn. Oh, he spoke of Miss Kate clearly enough! He talked.....that reminds me.....of their having been near neighbours all their lives, and of their having been brought up together, and of their being great friends. But somehow or other he left the impression on my mind that he meant more than all that. I did not notice," he continued, after a pause, "anything between them last night, did you?"

"No, I can't say that I saw anything of the sort;" replied his sister. "He sat next me at dinner," she continued, with a recurrence in a slighter degree of the blush which the first mention of the subject had occasioned her; "and after dinner he seemed to me to be talking much more to the other sister."

"But that might have been mere civility to a stranger newly come among them. The other sister, Miss Margaret, seemed to me to have very little in her."

"Oh, I thought her a very nice girl!"

"She has lived, she told me, all her life till now in Paris; I never like French women. They never have any sympathy with anything, or person, or subject outside of the barriers of Paris."

And then the brother and sister went into the

dining-room; and the presence of the servants prevented any further conversation upon the subject of the Lindisfarn lasses.

Frederick Falconer had in the mean time ridden up to the Chase, as has been seen, bent on acting upon the sage hints that had been thrown out by his father over night as they were returning together from the dinner party, with some little modification of his own. He perfectly recognised the justice of the old gentleman's reasons for thinking Kate the more desirable match of the two. But he could not bring himself to make quite so light as his father was disposed to do, of the opposition which he well knew awaited him on the part of Lady Farnleigh. He had far better means of knowing, as he said to himself, how great her influence over her goddaughter was. And besides, though he was by no means deficient in a sufficiently high appreciation of his own advantages, and was not without a certain degree of hope that Miss Lindisfarn was not altogether indisposed to like him, yet he was far from having the same degree of confidence on the subject, that he had chosen to manifest in speaking to his father. And then again, he really was powerfully attracted by Margaret's beauty and manner, and had already begun to draw comparisons between the two girls entirely to the advantage of the new-comer. He had spent the whole of the two hours he had passed at his desk

in the bank that morning, before he had stolen away from it to ride up to the Chase, in reviewing the grounds of such a comparison. Both girls were handsome,—there was no doubt about that. But he thought that the more delicate and less rustic beauty of the Parisian had more attractions for him. Then there was no denying that she had more style, more grace, more of *le grand air*, said Freddy to himself, calling up his own *savoir* and experiences. He had a notion too that her ways of thinking and tastes were probably better adapted to his own. There were things in Kate that he did not altogether like; that violent passion of hers for tearing over the country like a female Nimrod, for instance—her way, too, of blurting out whatever came into her head, often with a certain look in her eye as if she were laughing at one. He had seen no symptom of anything like this in Margaret. In fact, the meaning in her eyes, as far as he had seen—and it must be admitted, that she *had* the most exquisitely expressive eyes that were ever seen in a human head!—had been characterized by anything but an expression of ridicule when they had rested on him.

In short, though perfectly well aware that it behoved him to win the heart and hand of Kate, if he could, he had pretty well made up his mind that it would be a far more agreeable task to him

to win those of Margaret. But there was something in Mr. Frederick's constitution and natural disposition, which disinclined him from paying much attention to that part of his father's counsel which had alluded to the danger of falling between two stools. Two stools seemed to Mr. Freddy so much better and safer than only one. Surely it was not prudent to put all one's eggs into one basket! Surely two strings to one's bow were admitted to be a good thing! He could not bring himself to back himself frankly and heartily to win with the one horse, to the entire giving up of all hopes of the other. The unknown quantities that entered into the problem to be solved, were so much larger than the known ones, that he felt it to be far the most prudent plan to keep the matter open as long as might be, make what progress he could, without committing himself irrevocably on either side, and be guided by circumstances.

It would be far from wise, too, to disregard such a *pis-aller* as Miss Merriton. *Pis-aller!* Twenty-five thousand pounds absolutely her own, and her brother looking as if a good sharp English spring might make an end of him! A very pretty *pis-aller*, indeed. It was all very well for his father to talk in that way, when he had set his heart on going in for the whole of the Lindisfarn property. But there was many a slip between *that* cup and

the lip. Miss Merriton was a very charming little girl. He had a strong persuasion that he might have her for the asking; or at least that after a due period of service for such a pretty little Rachel, he might make sure of her. And it would be very unwise to throw such a chance to the winds before he was sure of something better.

It was in this frame of mind that Mr. Frederick locked up his desk, after sitting at it for a couple of hours; and slipped out of the bank to order his horse and ride up to the Chase. Mr. Falconer senior was very indulgent to his son and heir as to the amount of attendance he exacted from him at the bank, if only the hours spent away from it, were used advantageously in a social point of view; and he was especially well pleased at all times, and more particularly after the conversation of the night before, to know that his son was up at Lindisfarn Chase.

So Mr. Frederick had arrived there, still looking, as Lady Farnleigh had said, for all the world as if he had just been taken out of the band-box, in which a London tailor had sent him down for the enlightenment and instruction of Sillshire, just as the ladies were about to sit down to luncheon.

END OF PART IV.

Part Fifth.

CHAPTER XII.

FRED'S LUNCHEON AT THE CHASE.

MR. FREDERICK FALCONER arrived at the Chase just as the ladies were going to sit down to luncheon. The ladies were Miss Immy and the Lindisfarn lasses. And they were about to partake of that meal specially sacred to ladies and ladies' men alone. It was a great opportunity for Freddy. There was neither Lady Farnleigh nor Mr. Mat. In the presence of either of those persons, Mr. Freddy was, as the old story records Punch to have declared himself to have felt when Mrs. Carter who translated Epictetus was among his audience, unable to "talk his own talk." Freddy Falconer could not talk his own talk, when either Lady Farnleigh or Mr. Mat was present.

But on the present occasion all evil influences were absent, and all good ones were in the ascen-

dant. There was Miss Immy in high good humour; there was the minced veal and mashed potatoes; beautiful golden-coloured butter, and the home-made loaf; a currant tart, and a bowl of Sillshire cream! There was the decanter of sherry for Miss Immy; the small jug of amber ale for Miss Kate, the *carafe* of sparkling water for Miss Margaret. The malignant fairy godmother was far away up in her wind-swept garden at Wanstrow; the Squire was beating the turnips in a distant field, and the odious Mr. Mat was trudging by his side. Had ever a ladies' man a fairer field? Nor can it be by any means said that he had *no favour*!

Both the young ladies, as we already know, were more or less favourably disposed towards him, each after her own fashion. And Miss Immy was one of those who are disposed to allow their fullest weight to the claims of old neighbourhood and long acquaintanceship. Freddy Falconer, too, had in her eyes the paramount advantage over either of the other two young men who had been there the previous evening, of being thorough Sillshire. Captain Ellingham and Mr. Merriton were both strangers and new acquaintances, which made a very notable difference to Miss Immy.

"And what do you think of our new importations into Sillshire?" asked Kate, when Fred had been cordially asked to take some luncheon, and

was comfortably established by the side of one of the young ladies, and opposite to the other. Kate was sitting opposite to Miss Immy, and Margaret on the side of the table nearest the fire, between them. Mr. Fred therefore took the goods the gods provided him—*i.e.*, minced veal, potatoes and sherry, currant tart and Sillshire cream—in a position yet more shone on by the rays of beauty than that of Philip's warlike son at the Royal feast for Persia won!—a position more brilliant, but more difficult also than that of Alexander.

"What do you think of our new importations into Sillshire?" said Kate.

"The Merritons, or Captain Ellingham? Which are you alluding to?"

"To both. But you knew the Merritons before, did you not?"

"Not I! I never set eyes on either of them till they came down here. They were old friends, I fancy, of our business connexions in London. I think my father had seen Mr. Merriton in London."

"Quite a young man he seems," said Kate.

"Oh yes! A boy rather one might say. He has just come of age. And upon my word he looks as if an English winter would do for him. Poor fellow! I should say he would have done more wisely to settle in his mother's country—in Italy—where he has spent most part of his life."

"Oh, in Italy?" said Margaret. "He told me

yesterday at dinner that he had lived abroad 'most of his life.'"

"Yes, and when a man has done that, he is rarely fit for English life in any way."

"Oh, don't say so, Mr. Falconer; or I shall fancy that I am not fitted for English life, or that you don't think me so," said Margaret, with a look of the most tenderly appealing reproachfulness in her eyes, as pathetically eloquent as if she had been expecting her doom from the arbiter of her destiny.

"Nay! it is quite a different thing in the case of a lady," said Freddy, colouring a little. "The foreign ways and manners, which are apt to make a man perhaps not altogether.....what ladies like in this country—or gentlemen, indeed, either, for that matter—only serve to add new grace to one of the other sex. Besides, there is a vast difference between Italy and Paris. There is, as all the world knows, no charm equal to that of a Parisian woman," said Mr. Freddy, with the enthusiasm of intense conviction.

"Is there no chance then for poor home-bred Zillshire folk?" asked Kate, with a laugh in her voice, and roguish quizzing in her eyes, and just the least little bit of pique in her heart.

"Now, Miss Kate, you know how far that is from my feeling in the matter. Surely you and I are much too old friends to misunderstand each other upon such a point."

The position was a difficult one. The worst of it was, that there was no possibility of making any by-play with the eyes! What the tongue says may almost always be modified sufficiently for all purposes, if one can but find the means of supplying a running commentary with the eyes, addressed to one special reader. But Fred's situation, with one lady opposite to him, and one at right angles to him, shut him out from that resource; unless, indeed, from such very limited use of it as could be resorted to by seizing and making the most of the opportunities afforded him by the momentary employment of one of the two pairs of bright eyes, under the cross-fire of which he was sitting, on a plate or a drinking-glass. And even so there was very little good to be done with Kate in this fashion, unless it was in the way of laughing. Kate would laugh with you or at you, with her eyes, as much as you pleased—would answer a laugh in your eyes, and answer it openly or aside, as the case needed. But she did not seem to understand any tenderer eye-language. Or if she did, she would not talk it with Freddy Falconer, old friends as they were.

And that was the reason why, after that luncheon-table campaign was over, Fred felt that he had made more progress that day with Miss Margaret than with Miss Kate.

As regarded Mr. Merriton, however, he found

the latter more inclined to agree with him than the former. Notwithstanding Kate's wish to be good-natured, and to make herself and their new neighbourhood generally agreeable to the strangers, and the reality of the interest she had expressed to Mr. Merriton about Italy and Italian places and things, he had seemed to her rather a feckless sort of body—rather a poor creature. And Kate was about the last girl in the world to like a man who belonged in any degree to the category of “poor creatures,” or to admit that the absence of manliness and vigour could be atoned for by elegance of manner and advantages of person. She was not disposed to undervalue his capacity for assisting her in her study of Dante. But she would have been more inclined to like him, if her attention had been called to his capacity for riding well up to hounds. Doubtless she would have preferred a cavalier equally calculated to shine in the field and in the study; but if one good quality out of the two could be had only, I take it Kate would have decided for the hounds, and Dante would have gone to the wall. I do not say, be it observed, that Kate Lindisfarn was a very charming girl because of this; I only say that she was a very charming girl, and that such was the case.

As for Margaret, she would have cared nothing at all about the riding to hounds; and truth to

say, very little indeed about the capacity for understanding Dante. And, as we know, she was "a very charming girl," too. But some of the value of that phrase of course depends upon the object on whom the charm operates, and by whom it is recognised. Now there can be no doubt at all that Margaret was a very particularly charming girl to Mr. Falconer, despite her disagreement with him about Mr. Merriton.

"For my part," said she, shooting across the table one of those glances with which young ladies, who are properly up in all the departments of eye language, know how to render such a declaration rather agreeable than otherwise to the receiver of it—"For my part, I think you are too hard upon poor Mr. Merriton. It is unfair to expect that he should possess all the advantages which can only come from a wider and larger knowledge of the world."

"Really, Miss Margaret, I had no intention of being hard on him," said Falconer, retuning her look with interest; "and I shall have less inclination than ever to be so, of course—(eye commentary here, intelligible to the merest tyro in that language)—if you take him under your protection."

"I did not mean to say a word," put in Kate; "and really I don't think there is a word to be said against his manner. It is that of a very young man, that is all."

"That is it," said Margaret *avec intention* and looking as she spoke, not at her sister, but at Falconer, "I never can find such mere boys very agreeable."

"I agree with Mr. Frederick," said Miss Immy; "my notion is, that if the poor-wished lad had been born and bred in Zillshire, he would not have looked for all the world as though he had lived on sugar and water and sweet biscuits all his life, like Miss Lasseron's Italian greyhound!"

"And what about the other new comer among us?" said Falconer, not addressing himself to any one of the party more than to another. "What of Captain Ellingham?"

"Now that is being harder than ever upon poor Mr. Merriton, to bring the two men into contrast in that way," said Kate.

"Well! I confess I cannot agree with you there, Kate," said her sister. "If there is any hardness in the matter, I think it is all the other way, for my part."

"Oh, Margaret, how can you think so," said Kate with some emphasis.

"And I do not think Mr. Falconer had any notion of making a comparison that would be disadvantageous to Mr. Merriton, at all events," added Margaret.

"Indeed I had not," replied Falconer. "I found Captain Ellingham markedly civil; and I have

not a word to say in his disparagement in any way. I do not doubt that he is a most able and meritorious officer, notwithstanding the position he occupies in the service. Of course, from merely passing an evening in a drawing-room with two men, one can form no opinion except as to their general exterior agreeability; and as far as that goes, I confess that I think Merriton has all the advantage."

"Why what in the world did you see in Captain Ellingham to make you take an aversion to him?" asked Kate.

"I did not take an aversion to him the least in the world, I assure you, my dear Miss Lindisfarn! On the contrary. But it seems that I only shared the impression he made upon your sister."

"I own that I did not see anything particularly attractive about him, notwithstanding all that Lady Farnleigh said in his praise," said Margaret.

"Is he a great friend of Lady Farnleigh's then?" asked Falconer.

"Oh yes, and according to her, he is a *chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*;—a mirror of all the virtues! I dare say he may be; but....."

"Oh, Lady Farnleigh's approbation is quite sufficient to secure to the fortunate possessor of it that of your sister, Miss Margaret," said Falconer, with some little appearance of pique in his manner. "When you have been a little longer an

inmate of the Chase, you will doubtless make that discovery for yourself."

"And if I pinned my faith upon anybody's judgment in all the world, I am very sure that I could not have a safer and better guide," cried Kate with some vehemence; "and I have no doubt Margaret will discover that too, before she has been here long. Perhaps I should be wiser," she added, with a momentary half-glance at Falconer, "if I followed her guidance in all cases more implicitly."

"I am sure no one could doubt the excellence of Lady Farnleigh's judgment on the subject," said Freddy, looking rather discomfited; "but probably she was speaking of Captain Ellingham as of an old friend and contemporary of her own."

"Hardly that, I should think," said Kate. "Why how old a man should you take Captain Ellingham to be?"

"Well, he is one of those men who may be almost any age; but I should say he must be on the wrong side of forty," replied Falconer.

"Impossible!" cried Kate. "I am no judge of people's ages; but to my notion Captain Ellingham seems quite a young man."

"A young man, Kate! why he is quite grey. I declare he looks every bit as old as Mr. Mat."

"He certainly *is* very grey, both on the head and about the beard," said Freddy; "but that is

not the worst of it. There are certain lines about the face.....”

“I don’t think a man’s appearance is at all injured by a few grey hairs among the black ones; and as for the lines, a face is far more interesting to me, that looks as if the owner had been doing something else all his life than thinking of taking care of it!” cried Kate, in her usual impetuous way, having been provoked into saying more than she would otherwise have done, by the spitefulness of Falconer’s remarks, and by his attack on her with reference to Lady Farnleigh.

“Oh! if Kate prefers grey-beards, there can be no more to be said on the subject, you know, Mr. Falconer, *Affaire de goût!* We have only to remember it and to respect it, *n’est-ce pas!*” said Margaret.

“But is there nothing worth talking of except beards, either grey, black, or brown? What of the other new arrivals? What of Miss Merriton? On that subject I am sure Mr. Frederick ought to be able to enlighten us, for he was studying it all dinner time.”

“What else was there for me to do, unless it were to eat my dinner in silence?” remonstrated Falconer. “My opinion was not wanted in the discussion that was going on about poachers, between your father and Lady Farnleigh and Mr. Mat. I could not venture to do Mr. Merriton

such wrong as to prevent him from consecrating all his attention to Miss Margaret, as he seemed so particularly well inclined to do. What else remained for me, except to do the civil, as indeed I was in every way bound to do, to Miss Merriton?"

"Of course, you could do no otherwise," said Margaret; "and now give us the result of your investigations."

"The result is very soon and very easily stated," replied Freddy. "Miss Merriton is a perfectly lady-like, well-educated, very timid, very shy, and, I should say, very uninteresting young lady. There is no fault to be found with her. But neither is there anything except negative good to be said of her."

It seemed to be more easy for the little party around the luncheon table to come to an agreement on this subject, than it had been on the, it must be supposed, more interesting topic of the lords of the creation. For there was little dissent from the judgment pronounced by Mr. Frederick on the quiet and unobtrusive little creature whose chief title to notice in the world—her twenty-five thousand pounds in her own absolute disposition—he had not deemed it necessary to touch on in summing up her claims to consideration.

And then the ladies rose to quit the table, and Mr. Frederick took his leave, and rode back slowly to Silverton, pondering many things in his mind.

His visit had very manifestly done little towards forwarding his views, as far as they coincided with those of his father. He had accomplished as serious an amount of flirtation with Miss Margaret as could have been expected from the circumstances. But he had, if anything, lost rather than gained ground with Miss Kate. The progress in either case, was, however, he said to himself, probably infinitesimal. But he thought that the advance he had made towards attaining a necessary and accurate view of his position, and of the state of the game, was greater and more important.

"Lady Farnleigh means Kate for her penniless *protégé*, Captain Ellingham." That was the first *datum* which he thought might be with tolerable certainty deduced from his observations. "She has already begun to work towards that end; and has already achieved a commencement of success. How fierce the little lady was, when I ventured to sneer at her being led by the nose by her godmother! And I did not see the least sign which could encourage me to think that I can fight against that influence with success. No! to be honest with myself and keep clear of delusions, no sign; as long as I had the field all to myself it might have been different.....*might* have been. But now it would be a race carrying very heavy weight.

"Then," continued his meditations, "on the

other side.....there *are* signs. I have done more with Margaret in two days, than I have done with Kate in twice as many years, by Jove! The fact is, there is more sympathy between us. Put all considerations of prudence out of the question, I swear I would not hesitate a minute. What a graceful, elegant-mannered, intelligent, exquisitely pretty little creature she is. I am strongly inclined to think, let the old gentleman say what he will, that Margaret should be my game—out and out, without any shilly-shally.

“The one seems possible enough; the other looks to me very much like being impossible. If that detestable old woman up at Wanstrow means to make her marry Ellingham—and I have very little doubt upon that point—she will succeed in doing it. I don’t think she could turn Margaret round her finger in that way. There is a different sort of character there.

“And suppose I determine to play for Margaret out and out, and throw over at once all hope of the other; is the speculation so much worse an one? That old Wanstrow woman’s six thousand pounds are not worth counting. Pshaw! But about the place. Every word my father says about the importance of such a prize is true. The old boy is right enough there. But would it be so much more difficult to win Lindisfarn with Margaret than with Kate? I doubt it. Specially if I am

to assume that Kate marries Ellingham. How is he, a man without a penny in the world, to find the means of paying half the price of the Chase estates? A good fifty thousand would be needful, if a penny. Would it be likely that such a man should see his interest in causing the estates to be sold? With delay, uncertainty, expense? Would it not be very much more likely, supposing that he were to marry one girl, and I the other, that he would be exceedingly glad to accept the old gentleman's cash to the amount of half the value of the property? Is there any ground for imagining that the Squire would make an objection to such an arrangement, if desired by all the parties concerned? I cannot see it. If he held by the old name, I should make no difficulty about accommodating him.—'Falconer Lindisfarn, Esquire, of Lindisfarn.'—That would do remarkably well. Or 'Sir Falconer Lindisfarn!' better still; and why not? Yes, I think, I *think* that will be the game, the more prudent as well as the pleasanter game to play. Honestly, I do think so. But what about that fellow Merriton? Kate would never marry him. Is there any danger of his cutting me out with Margaret? She was more inclined to like him, than that boisterous, violent, upright and downright Kate! But I have a great notion that that was all *à mon adresse!* She has far more manner, far more knowledge of the world than her

sister in that respect. And I fancy, too, that she is one who would have the sense to know on which side her bread is buttered. And I hardly think Merriton would be in a position to make her mistress of Lindisfarn. I don't know, I must ask my father how that is; but I think not. Besides I do flatter myself that I could cut out that boy!"

So by the time Freddy had reached his father's door, he may be said to have pretty well made up his mind to enter himself, as he phrased it to his own mind, for the Margaret sweepstakes in thorough earnest, make a straight-forward race of it, and run his best.

Frederick Falconer was, it will have been seen, a shrewd man, not under the empire of self-delusion, and with a considerable gift of seeing characters and things as they really were. The net result of what had taken place at the luncheon-table at the Chase as regarded the others of the party who had been sitting at it, was not very different from what he had felt it to be. But he had not only made progress with the one sister, but had in a yet greater degree advanced his supposed rival's cause with the other. Kate had felt much more disposed to feel a liking for Captain Ellingham after that luncheon, than she had previously. She had defended him;—a very strong tie of attachment for natures like Kate's. She had thought that he was being unfairly and

ungenerously run down. And—strongest contribution of all to the net result—she had been made to feel as if he were on the side of her godmother, and the others on the contrary side.

On the following day, the Lindisfarn ladies had another guest at their luncheon-table. Mr. Merriton drove up to the Chase, as he had told Lady Farnleigh he would do, to give his invitations to the Friary for the following Wednesday. They were given and accepted, as far as the younger ladies were concerned (for Miss Immy pleaded important engagements at home; and all the ladies declared that they could not answer for the Squire, but thought they might for Mr. Mat); rather to Margaret's disgust. She accused Mr. Merriton in her heart of being very stupid for not preferring to have her and her uncle there alone, as she had projected and prepared for him. And, moreover, she did not look forward with any pleasure to what she feared would probably happen, when the whole party should be there together. She did not at all like being trotted out in the character of an archæological blue-stocking. The double necessity and incompatibility of hiding her utter ignorance and indifference on the one hand, and making them evident on the other, was embarrassing and disagreeable.

Nevertheless it was impossible to refuse; and the Lindisfarn lasses promised to be at the Friary

at one o'clock on the Wednesday, either under the escort of Mr. Mat, or, if that should fail them, with Lady Farnleigh.

Margaret, being out of humour, had rather snubbed Mr. Merriton. But he had proposed to Kate to show her and explain to her on Wednesday a volume of Piranesi's Views in Rome. And on her replying, in her good-humoured, lively way, that she should enjoy nothing so much, and should greatly like to see the Eternal City, he had gone away more in love with her than ever, and dreaming of the delight of returning to Italy with such a bride, and initiating her into all its glories, beauties, and enjoyments.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARTY AT THE FRIARY.

LADY SEMPRONIA, when at dinner the Canon had communicated to her Mr. Merriton's invitation, rather to her husband's surprise signified her intention of accepting it.

"I had hardly hoped," he said, "and did not give Mr. Merriton much hope, that you would be induced to go to the Friary; but you are quite right, my dear, to look upon this occasion as a somewhat extraordinary one. There is not a more interesting locality in the county, and I flatter myself that I shall be able to make the day a profitable, and indeed a memorable one for all present."

And during all the intervening days the doctor was in a state of pleasurable excitement and anticipation, and worked hard to have every part of the subject in a complete state of preparation. He would have given a good deal to have secured the entire absence of Mr. Falconer. But he

reckoned, taking the usual habits of that archæological financier as a base for his calculations, that he should have a good two hours and a half before him, ere the banker could arrive.

It was not without considerable disquietude and surprise, therefore, that just as the modest one-horse chaise which was conveying the Canon and Lady Sempronia to the Friary, was jogging along the main street of the little village of Weston, while it yet wanted five minutes to one o'clock, the Doctor saw the banker's handsome carriage, with its smart pair of bays, dash past and turn at the end of the village down the road to the private bridge over the Sill, which leads to the Friary house.

"Good Heavens! There is Falconer!" he exclaimed, turning pale. "But it is impossible! It can't be. It must 'be Frederick, and the carriage is going back for his father. Odd that the young man should not have ridden over, too; but I suppose as the carriage was ordered out he thought it as well to make one job of it."

"And if it were Mr. Falconer," said Lady Sempronia, "what then? I cannot see, Dr. Lindisfarn, that you can pretend to a monopoly of all the old stones in the county. Though no doubt you are the only individual in it who would deprive your family of necessaries to spend your substance on such things. Mr. Falconer can afford to play the fool."

"That is fortunate, my dear," returned the Doctor; "for it is what he assuredly very often does."

And then, when the Canon's carriage drove up to the door of the Friary, at which Mr. Merriton was standing to receive his guests, the Doctor, as he alighted, saw behind him the pig-tail, and the florid, complacent face, and the well-grown, black-silk-encased legs, of the Silverton banker. Giving a silent shake of the hand to his host—for he could not at the moment spare time or words for a longer greeting—and leaving him to receive and welcome Lady Sempronia as best he could, he made one stride towards his enemy, crying out: "Is it possible, Mr. Falconer? You here at this time in the morning? In truth this is a.....a circumstance"—the word pleasure stuck in the veracious Doctor's throat;—"which I had not expected. I hope that Mr. Merriton is aware that you have broken in upon all your habitudes,—innovated on the practice of—how many lustres shall I say?—in order to wait on him!"

"My friend Merriton is, I trust, aware, Doctor, that I would do more than that for him, if need were," said the banker, with a bow and a sly wink aside to the young man.

"I am quite aware, my dear sir," said Merriton, returning the banker's telegraph, "how much Mr. Falconer is deranging his usual habits in order to

give us the pleasure of his company. It is *very* kind of him."

"But business, Mr. Falconer! What will the bank do without you?"

"Oh, the bank can take care of itself, for once and away, Doctor. The fact is, if Merriton will forgive me for confessing the entire truth," continued the banker, eyeing his victim with a sweet and complacent smile, "that had our meeting here to-day been of merely an ordinary festive character, I might have contented myself with enjoying such share of it as I could have come in for after business hours. But when it became known to me that the party were to have the treat of inspecting the antiquities of the Friary under your auspices, Doctor, and the advantage of your explanations of them, I could not resist the temptation of being present. I could not indeed!" And then Mr. Falconer took a long pinch of snuff, with an air that included in it the expression of a defiance to mortal combat. And the mortified Canon knew what was before him, and saw that the treat to which he had been looking forward with so much pleasure, had been snatched from his grasp.

Not that he was afraid of his adversary; or at all disinclined to a fair stand-up fight with him for any number of hours by the Friary clock. That also was a pleasure in its kind; but it was

of a different sort from the more luxurious and seducing one which he had promised himself, of having it all his own way, and leading a troop of admiring and unquestioning women from one subject of his learning and eloquence to another.

And then they passed on to the drawing-room, where Mr. Frederick was found busily engaged in prosecuting those investigations into the social qualities of Miss Merriton, which had hitherto only led him, as he had assured the ladies at the Chase, to the conclusion that she was a wholly uninteresting little body.

And then came Lady Farnleigh and Captain Ellingham; and not very long after them the Lindisfarn damsels with Mr. Mat. It was nearly half-past one before they arrived; and there was a chorus of outcry at their unpunctuality.

"Not like you, Kate, to be the laggard! And it was to be one o'clock, military time. We have already had the first of our course of lectures," said Lady Farnleigh.

"Ah! I was not on Birdie, you see, Godmama. When I am, I can answer for my time. But we had to come all round by Silverton; and Thomas must be answerable for the delay."

"Thomas is as regular as clockwork; and if you had started in time you would have been here in time," rejoined the Doctor, not in the best possible

humour, though he had no longer reason for being anxious to begin the day's amusement punctually.

"Well Uncle, we will behave better another time."

"No, no, put the saddle on the right horse," said Mr. Mat; "Thomas Tibbs is no way in fault; nor is Miss Kate. We had to wait half-an-hour for Miss Margaret."

"Why, I am sure we came down together, didn't we, Kate?" said Margaret, blushing very red, and shooting at Mr. Mat out of those fine black eyes of hers, a look of which it might have been said not only in the Yankee tongue, but in good English, that it was "a caution!"

"Yes," said the abominable Mr. Mat, quietly; "you came down the stairs together, because Kate waited for you. But it was you and not Kate, who tried on three dresses before you could please yourself. Ask Simmons else."

"There never was half-an-hour spent to better purpose, if Simmons spoke the truth," whispered Frederick, at Margaret's side. "What a lovely toilette!"

"Do you like it! Then I am sure I don't mind how long I kept that old bear waiting," returned Margaret, in the same tone; "not that what he says is true, though. But is he not an insufferable old nuisance?"

"Our likings agree," said he; "Mr. Mat is a

particular aversion of mine; and he knows it well enough. There is no love lost between us. Strangely enough, your sister is fond of him."

"Oh, Kate is so odd; so odd in many things. I am afraid she and I shall find many points of difference between us."

"It will be a great advantage to your sister—your return home, Miss Lindisfarn. If she would endeavour to form her manner from yours, it would be everything to her."

"Of course I have had great advantages, which poor Kate has not shared. But I flatter myself that the generality of the good people here are not so capable as some persons"—(eye practice!)"—"of seeing the deficiencies."

"Would you be better pleased for her sake, that *all* the people here should be blind to the differences between you, Mademoiselle Marguérite?"

"I am afraid that would tax my charity too severely," answered she, in a tone so low, that it was almost a whisper. Then she added, in a rather, but very little, louder voice, "You call me Marguérite. You are the only person here that does. I like it so much better than that odious Margaret, as they call it! Do call me always Marguérite." Whether this was to be taken as a permission to call her by her Christian name, or merely as a request to be addressed in French

instead of in English, she skilfully left it to the gentleman himself to decide.

Then, it having been resolved by general vote that one portion of the avowed business of the day should be done before going to luncheon, and that it would be very pleasant to break their archæological investigations by that agreeable diversion, the Doctor arose, and proceeded to unroll a large plan which he had brought with him, while most of the party crowded around him.

“Where is Margaret?” cried the Doctor; “Margaret, my love; here is your place, by my side. You are to be my fellow labourer, you know, in illustrating the Friary as it deserves.”

Margaret groaned softly, and looked up into Frederick Falconer’s face with an appealing expression of intense annoyance in her eyes, which made them look lovelier, he thought, than he had ever seen them yet, as she said: “I must go, I suppose! It is very provoking. Mind, I trust to you to save me from this horrid bore, if any chance of extricating me should offer.”

“Would that I could,” whispered Fred.

And then the Doctor, with his victim by his side, unrolled his topographical plan, and began:

“The plan of the actually existing buildings,—just put your hand on the paper, my dear, to hold it open, so that they may all see it;”—Margaret, admirably prompt to extract from unfavourable cir-

cumstances all the little good they might be capable of yielding, laid a beautifully white and slender hand, with long slender fingers, flat on the paper, taking off her glove for the purpose, as if the service demanded of her could not have been performed otherwise; and the Doctor proceeded:

“The plan of the modern part of the actually existing buildings has been traced here in black, while that of those portions of the ancient monastery which have perished, has, as far as it has been possible to discover the position of them, been laid down in red lines. The part of the plan coloured green, represents those portions of the actually existing house which were part of the original building. It will be at once perceived, therefore, that the entire wing, including the drawing-room in which we are at this moment assembled, is of modern construction;—comparatively modern that is to say, dating probably from the early part of the seventeenth century.”

“I am sure you will forgive me, my good Doctor, for interrupting you,” said Mr. Falconer, “but it is impossible to hear that statement laid down in so unqualified a manner, without pointing out that there are grave doubts.....”

“Thank you, Falconer,” cried the Doctor, turning on him with the aspect of a boar brought to bay. “I am perfectly aware of all that you would say. I said *probably*—probably from the begin-

ning of the seventeenth century. We shall go more accurately into the examination of that question, when we shall have brought our investigations down to that time. You will become aware of the advantage of chronological treatment in matters of this kind, when you have applied your distinguished erudition to more of them. Allow me to proceed."

Mr. Falconer was a man of bland manners, and particularly prided himself on suavity of demeanour *à toute épreuve*. But those of the party who knew him well, were made aware by a little vibratory motion of his pigtail, that he was restraining himself from giving way to his indignation with difficulty. He succeeded, however, so far as to permit no outward demonstration of the tempest that was raging within him to appear, beyond a satirical smile, as, having first soothed his nervous system with a pinch of snuff, he said:

"I bide my time then, Doctor!"

"I was about to point out to you," resumed the Doctor, "that only the kitchens, the pantry, the small room adjoining the kitchen on the south side, used I believe by the late owners as the house-keeper's room, and possibly still appropriated to the same purpose....." The Doctor paused, and directed an enquiring glance at Miss Merriton, thereby causing his hearers to do the same, to the exceeding annoyance and discomfiture of that little

lady, who had been surreptitiously engaged in the background in condoling in whispered accents with Lady Sempronia on some of that lady's trials. She felt like a schoolboy, who had been suddenly "set on" at the moment, when having been absorbed in the pages of a novel dexterously hidden beneath his Virgil, he has not the remotest idea of "the place." Lady Sempronia would have prompted her, but was no better informed of the matter in hand than herself.

"The room next the kitchen," said Lady Farnleigh; "is it still the housekeeper's room?"

"Yes, that is the housekeeper's room. Is she wanted?" asked poor Miss Merriton, sadly fluttered.

"Not yet. Not at present, thanks," resumed the Doctor.—"The housekeeper's room.—I was saying that the kitchens, the pantry, the housekeeper's room, and the north-west and north-east walls of the present dining-room, or part of them at least, are the only portions of the present house which belong to the ancient monastery."

But at that point of his discourse *pæna pede claudo* overtook the Doctor. The bland but inly raging old banker had bided his time, as he said, and found it!

"Excuse me, Doctor," he cried, pushing forward to the front of the little group to lay his finger on the plan; "excuse me if I say that I feel sure the

time will come when your persevering studies will convince you of the danger of laxity of statement in topographical details. The only parts of the present house included in the old monastery! What! Is there not the wash-house? One of the best characterised remnants in the place!"

"Now, my dear Falconer, I do hope that you will permit me to proceed with my statement of the facts. I am well aware of course that the foundations of the wall of the present wash-house....."

"You know, Dr. Lindisfarn, how deep a respect I entertain for the profundity of your erudition and the accuracy of your research; but I must be permitted to say that anyone who fails to see at a glance the contemporaneousness of the present wall with the foundations on which they stand, must be ignorant of the very A B C of archæology."

"I know no man for whose opinion I should have a greater deference on a matter of this kind than yours, Mr. Falconer. But really the grossness of the error into which you have fallen upon the present occasion, is a melancholy warning of the consequences of rash and too hasty induction."

"Rash induction, my dear Doctor! I find in Pringle's 'Survey of the Suppressed Religious Houses of the Hundreds of Perribash and Warlingcombe,' a plan, which gives....."

"Indications of walls, of which the ancient

foundations still remain ! I dare say you do. I flatter myself I am acquainted with Pringle's work. But Battledore, in his 'Peregrinations and Perlustrations of the Valley of the Sill'—a somewhat rare work, which you probably have never seen, Falconer, for a small edition only was privately printed, but I shall have much pleasure in showing you a copy—Battledore clearly shows that the building which had existed on those foundations, was in ruin in his time."

Margaret, who all this time had been dutifully holding open her uncle's plan with her fair hand outspread upon it in the manner which has been described, thinking when the dispute between the rival antiquaries had reached that point, either that her services were for the moment no longer needed, or that a sufficient time had been allowed for all present to admire the beauty of her hand, withdrew it from the paper, which immediately rolled itself up against the fingers of the Doctor, who had been holding it on the other side. Margaret, who was already gently withdrawing herself from the prominent position she had been made to occupy at her uncle's side, feared that the coiling up of the paper would draw his attention to her desertion. But she need not have alarmed herself. He was far too intent on the battle which had begun to rage, to think about any such small matters. Feeling the plan roll itself

up into a *bâton*, he grasped it, as he turned upon his adversary, who was unprovided with any such weapon.

"Very cleverly done," whispered Frederick in her ear, as drawing back from the place she had held, she found herself again by his side. "And now, while my father is telling him how Shuttlecock points out that Battledore knew nothing at all about it, we may escape."

"Have you any idea what it is all about?" asked Margaret confidentially.

"Not the least in the world! But I hope the fight will last all the remainder of the afternoon. It won't hurt them; and it will be a great blessing to us. Don't you think we might steal out upon the lawn through this open window? There is a beautiful greenhouse; let me show it to you, while the war is still raging over the foundations of the wash-house."

"The phrase 'ruins,' my dear Doctor," said the old banker, with a smile of infinite superiority, "is a very vague one. In this case it was, in all probability, used by the writer whom you cite, and who is perfectly well known to me—though I have not much opinion of the reliability of his work—to express the condition of the roof." Here the old gentleman took a pinch of snuff, and looked round on the bystanders with an air which seemed to call their attention to the fact of his

having utterly demolished his opponent. "But with regard to the walls," he continued, "I think—I *do* think, that the evidence of your own senses, my dear Doctor, would be sufficient to convince you that they are of the same date as the foundations on which they rest. If our kind hosts will permit us to institute an examination on the spot.....?"

"Oh, by all means," said Mr. Merriton; "the entire house is at your disposition. If you will step this way....."

And the combatants accordingly followed him to the back part of the house, which stood very close to the cliff which has been described, and occupied the site of the refectory and adjoining buildings—buttery hatches, and so forth—of the old monastery. But it may be feared that when they reached the battle-ground itself, a great portion of the interest of the fight was lost. Were there ever knights who would not have taken their lances from their rests, and ceased from poking each other, if all the spectators had retired from the lists? And unhappily not a single soul of those assembled in the drawing-room at the Friary cared sufficiently to know when the wash-house was built, to follow the combatants. There was still Mr. Merriton for umpire; and the dispute had therefore to be carried on. But it is permissible to suppose that if it had not

been for his presence the fight would have languished.

As it was, the remaining members of the party, who were left in the drawing-room—Lady Farnleigh, Miss Merriton, Lady Sempronia, Kate, Mr. Mat and Captain Ellingham—were left to their own devices by the—it is to be feared, not unwelcome—diversion.

“We must not regret, Miss Merriton,” said Lady Farnleigh, “that the great question of the antiquity of your wash-house, which seems so doubtful, should be finally set at rest, as it no doubt will now be; although we are deprived, in consequence of the difficulty, of the benefit of the Doctor’s guidance. I propose that we put the time to profit by investigating as best we may by the light of nature, that charming fragment of the old cloister that forms the northern boundary of your lovely flower-garden.”

“That is the only bit of the antiquities of the Friary that I care about,” said Mr. Mat; “and I do think that flower-garden is the prettiest spot in all Sillshire.”

“Don’t you think we may venture, Miss Merriton, to conduct our own researches in the flower-garden without inquiring what Pringle and Battledore have written upon the subject?” said Lady Farnleigh.

“If Lady Sempronia feels equal to strolling so

far....." said Miss Merriton, turning to that plaintive lady, by whose side she was sitting on a sofa, listening with admirable patience and sympathy to the tale of her various trials.

"I am afraid," said Lady Sempronia, whose mind was full of the impending danger that the Doctor might be stimulated into composing a monograph on the date of the Friary wash-house, "I am afraid that I must not venture out in the sun. It is very powerful at this hour. But pray do not let me detain you, Miss Merriton."

"But perhaps Lady Farnleigh, who is doubtless far more competent to act as guide than I am, will excuse me. If she would kindly undertake the office of *cicerone* I should prefer remaining indoors myself," said Miss Merriton.

"Oh! I am thoroughly competent, I assure you," rejoined Lady Farnleigh. "If I have only your permission, I undertake to do the honours of the gardens *on ne peut mieux*."

So Lady Farnleigh, Kate, Mr. Mat and Captain Ellingham, walked out into the garden by the same window through which Margaret and Frederick Falconer had passed. The latter had, however, gone into the conservatory, which occupied the space of some forty feet between the house and the fragment of the ancient cloister, to which Lady Farnleigh had alluded.

The flower-garden in question was worth a

visit; and none the less so that the place was well known to all the *partie carrée* who now entered it, except Captain Ellingham. It is indeed as lovely a spot as the imagination can well conceive. Completely shut in on the Silverton side by the lofty jutting limestone cliff, close round the base of which the water ran in a deeper and swifter stream than in any other part of its course, it was enclosed on the side opposite to the front of the house by the river, the opposite bank of which was fringed with a luxuriant plantation of rhododendrons, all the way, from the private bridge leading to the village, to the spot where it disappeared round the cliff. Over the top of this flourishing plantation the spire of Weston Church was visible, and behind it the higher and more distant parts of the broken open ground, with its patches of broom, which intervened between the valley of the Sill and the woods belonging to the Chase, and behind them again an horizon formed by the lofty summit of Lindisfarn brow.

On the opposite side to the river, the flower-garden was shut in by the house, by the conservatory, one end of which abutted on it, and by the old fragment of cloister, consisting of three arches, and a smaller portion of the back wall of the cloister, which had, however, been restored and completed by masonry of recent construction, and on which the other end of the conservatory

rested. The three isolated arches of crumbling grey stone, standing thus on the exquisitely kept sward of the lawn, and serving as a support for a variety of flowering creepers, were the pride and beauty of the garden. They stood at right angles, as will be understood, if I have succeeded in rendering the above account of the locality intelligible, to that face of the cliff, which shut in the garden; and which, itself richly clothed with a wilder and more exuberant growth of coarser creeping plants, was so beautiful an object as to make it questionable whether man's handiwork or nature's had contributed most to the ornament of the little paradise encircled by them both. The remaining side of the enclosed space—that looking towards the upper valley of the Sill and the pasture ground on its banks, which was once the home farm of the monastery, and now the park attached to the modern residence—was only partially shut in by plantations, of horse-chestnut and birch chiefly, so as to leave peeps of the distant view in this direction.

“I do think Mr. Mat is right,” said Kate, as they all four stood on the lawn in front of the three old arches, which were probably indebted for their preservation, so many years after the destruction of their fellows, to the support and protection derived from the cliff against which the last of them rested. “I do think

this is the prettiest spot altogether that I ever saw."

"It really is a most perfect thing in its way," said Captain Ellingham, who, to tell the truth, though nobody but Lady Farnleigh had observed it, had been in not the best of all possible humours since they had arrived at the Friary; for instead of attending to the Doctor's exordium as he ought to have done, he had been watching Margaret—that "most beautiful creature he had ever seen in his life"—and all her ways and works, and he did not like what he had seen. He was not pleased with the incident arising from the tardiness of their arrival. Not that he in the least blamed Margaret for the delay of the half-hour employed in the trying-on of three dresses, for he agreed with Falconer in thinking, though he had not said it, that the result produced was well worth the time employed to realize it. But he had not been pleased with her allowing the blame to be cast on her sister, and still less with a certain expression of face which he had noted when Mr. Mat had so brutally betrayed her secret. Then again, though he had much admired the exquisite little hand, so skillfully laid out (literally) for admiration on the Doctor's topographical plan, he had most ungratefully felt annoyed at her for the manner of the exhibition of it. And it cannot perhaps be said that he was altogether unreason-

able in withholding his entire approbation in either case. But he was far more displeased at certain other things that had fallen within the scope of his observation, with which he really had no right to find fault. He had noted all the by-play and whispering with Falconer, and judged it from a stand point of moral criticism, which his judgment would hardly have placed itself on, if he had been himself the culprit in Falconer's place. He had marked also her escape out of the window, followed by him; and it sufficed to bring his indignation and his illhumour to its climax. And although the sins she had been guilty of would only have confirmed him in the opinion, that she certainly was one of the sweetest creatures on earth, if he instead of another had been the accomplice of them, as it was, he began to ask himself whether Lady Farnleigh had not been right, when she called him a goose in the carriage as they were returning from the Chase.

The Honourable Captain Ellingham, though doubtless, as Fred Falconer had said, a very meritorious officer, was, it is very clear, a quite exceptionably unreasonable man when the question was one, not of haulyards and marling-spikes, but of pretty girls.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "NOSEY STONE."

CAPTAIN ELLINGHAM'S ill-temper was beginning to give way before the influences of the charming scene around him, and the thoroughly good-tempered, joyous, and open-hearted enjoyment of it by his companions; and he was gradually coming round more and more to the opinion that Lady Farnleigh had expressed as to the merits of the Lindisfarn lasses, and as to his appreciation of them, when a circumstance occurred, which, though it suddenly changed the immediate current of all his thoughts, yet eventually operated to complete Captain Ellingham's conversion to his old friend's opinion.

The face of Weston rock, as the cliff, which has been so frequently mentioned, was called by the educated classes—though the country-people generally nick-named it the "Nosey stone," from the manner in which it stood out from the hill-side behind it—the face of Weston rock which looks

towards Silverton, is, though very steep, not altogether precipitous. The most prominent part of it—the ridge of the nose, as it were—which is washed at its base by the river, is for more than half of the height from the water a naked and absolutely precipitous rock. The upper portion of this side of the cliff above this naked wall of rock, is very little less steep; but it is covered with a growth of creeping plants, which do not, however, sufficiently lessen its precipitous character to render it possible for any human foot to traverse it. On the other face of the cliff, that which overhangs and forms the boundary of the Friary gardens, the lower portion of the height is nearly as steep as that which overhangs the river; but it is not, like that, utterly devoid of inequalities on the surface and ledges, which in some degree break the face of it. The upper portion on this side is not so entirely precipitous; it is covered not only with a profusion of creeping plants, the long trailing branches of which hang down over the lower part, but over a considerable portion of its surface with patches and tufts of rank, coarse grass and herbage. So that it is possible on that side to descend from the top by the aid of the partial foothold, and the vigorous vegetation of the creepers. Nevertheless, considering that anyone attempting such a feat has some seventy or eighty feet of utterly unclimable precipice beneath him,

the edge of which he is approaching as he descends, and bearing in mind that the crumbling of a tuft of couch-grass, or the breaking of a twig, may accelerate his approach to its edge in such sort as to hurry him over it, the descent of the Nosey stone, even on this its least terrible side, is an undertaking in which one would not wish unnecessarily to engage.

The little party standing on the lawn in front of the old cloister arches, and consequently within a few feet of that face of the cliff which has been last mentioned, were speaking, as everybody always does speak in such cases, of the exceeding knowingness exhibited by the monks in the choice of their situations—how sure they always were to select the choice bits of all the country-side for their homesteads, and how perfectly well they understood all the points that go toward making any spot specially eligible for a habitation—when suddenly they were startled by a rustle, a rush among the brushwood on the face of the cliff above their heads, and in the next moment the fall of a heavy substance with a dead sounding *thud* on the turf of the lawn at their feet. It was a young lamb; and it lay on its side, giving only one or two convulsive movements with its hind legs—for the fall had killed it.

“Poor little thing;” said Kate, running forward, and stooping over it to see if it was indeed dead;

"it must have strayed from the mother in the field above. I think it is dead; look, Mr. Mat, see if the fall has quite killed it."

"Killed it, sure enough," said Mr. Mat; "lambs don't fall as cats do!"

"It is well for it, poor little beast, that it is killed," said Captain Ellingham, "for of course its bones must be broken."

Just then Margaret and Falconer emerged from the conservatory, were they also had heard and been startled by the noise of the fall. They came forward towards the spot where the others were gathered round the body of the unlucky little animal, with an eagerness of inquiry as to what the matter was, and what had happened, which had somewhat the appearance of being in a certain measure prompted by a feeling of the desirability of diverting the attention of the party away from their simultaneous re-appearance, after their period of retirement.

"Good gracious!" cried Margaret, when the nature of the accident had been explained to her, "what a mercy it is the creature did not tumble on any of our heads! It might have killed us on the spot!"

But as Margaret uttered the words, moralising the event after her own fashion, Captain Ellingham suddenly cried, "Hush!" lifting his finger as he spoke; "Hush! I thought I heard a voice up

there! Yes! there it is again.....A sob, as of a child crying. Is there any possibility that a child should be on the face of the cliff?"

"Hardly," said Mr. Mat; "more likely the voice you heard was from the top. Very likely some little shepherd or shepherdess, who has discovered the misfortune that has betided one of the flock."

"God grant the child, if it be one, may not come too close to the edge of the cliff!" said Lady Farnleigh. "It is a dangerous place. And it strikes me that unless the voice were quite at the very edge of the precipice, it could not be heard here."

"So I should say, too," replied Ellingham. "And yet I can hear it now, evidently the voice of a child crying. Hist! Do you not hear it?"

"There! Oh, yes! To be sure I do. It *is* a child crying."

"Yes! I can hear it too, now, very plainly. I think it must have come nearer," said Lady Farnleigh.

"What can we do to find out where it is?" cried Kate, turning to Captain Ellingham, who was still bending his ear to catch the sounds, that were at one moment more, and at another less distinctly audible.

"Do the ladies and gentlemen of Sillshire always go into committee instantly on the spot every time a little *gamin* cries, to investigate the

cause of the phenomenon?" said Margaret, tittering.

"Yes, they *du*!" cried Mr. Mat, turning on her fiercely, and speaking in his broadest Doric; "Yes, they du, Miss Margy, when 'tis at the voot of the Nosey stoan they hear it! Why, the poor child may be zearching for the lamb to the top of the cliff, and come to vall over in the zame manner, he might!"

"I believe," said Captain Ellingham, who had been attentively listening, "that the voice must be on the face of the cliff; I do not think we could hear it, as we do, if it was from anybody on the top. The sound would be too much impeded by the intervening mass of the hill, which prevents a person on the top from being visible."

And as he spoke, Captain Ellingham drew back from the face of the cliff towards the bank of the river, in order to be able to scan the whole surface of it with his eye. If the cliff had been naked, it would have been of course easy to do this in an instant. But the overgrowth of creepers, and brambles, and brushwood was in some parts quite abundant enough to hide a child or even a man among it. But after carefully and earnestly gazing for a minute or two, Captain Ellingham cried out:

"Yes! Yes! I think I see him, or her, whichever it is!"

"Where, where?" cried Kate, running out from

under the cliff to the place where Ellingham was standing, still intently examining the face of the rock.

"There ; a couple of fathom or so above the line where the vegetation ends and the naked rock begins. Do you see a large patch of yellow flowers ? Lift your eyes in a perpendicular line from the spot where the conservatory joins the old arches of the cloister, till you come to a noticeable clump of yellow flowers....."

"Yes, oh yes !" cried Kate, doing as she was bid ; "I have them !"

"Well ! just above, and a little to the right of that clump of flowers, I saw the bushes move, and I am almost sure that I caught a glimpse of a dress !"

"But, good Heaven !" cried Kate, turning pale, "if there is a child, or even a man, there, how are they to get away ? They must be in fearful danger !"

"It is a child's voice.....and I think a girl's," said Ellingham.

"Good Heaven ! What is to be done ?" asked Lady Farnleigh, looking in a scared manner from one to the other of the two gentlemen ;—the two ; for though there were three present on the lawn since Falconer had come out of the conservatory with Margaret, her eyes seemed to confine her appeal to Mr. Mat and Captain Ellingham.

"'Tis a bad place to get tu," said Mr. Mat.

"She, ev it is a girl, might get tu the top the zame way she got down; though perhaps she might vind it difficult to du so. But the worst is, that mayhap she don't know—pretty zure indeed she don't know—that the naked rock is ten or a dozen veet below her. And ev she goes on pushing and moving among the bushes she may vall any minute. Ev she would remain quite still till we could get to her with ladders and tackle, we might take her off the cliff safe enough."

"But how could she ever have got there, Mr. Mat?" asked Kate, in much distress; "do you think she fell over the edge of the cliff?"

"No! Depend upon it she clambered down after the lamb, that we saw vall. It is not so very difficult to get down by help of the bushes, and climb up again, ev you know what you are about, and what sort of place it is. I've been all over the vace of the cliff after birdsnests and blackberries, when I was a boy, time and again. She is uncommonly near the top of the naked rock though! And if she comes down any lower, God help her!"

"Shall I try to hail her? We could make her hear well enough; but it is a question whether we may not frighten her."

"Had you not better send a servant to the village, and tell the people to go and look after the child?" said Margaret.

"Tell ye what," said Mr. Mat, "better let me try to speak to her. She'll understand our Zillshire speach better. I should be less likely to frighten her than you. If we can only make her keep herself quite quiet till we can come tu her, it will be all right enough."

"There! there! now I see her plain enough," cried Captain Ellingham; "it is a little girl sure enough! I see her red dress."

"If she don't bide still, it is all up with her! She moved a couple of voot nearer the top of the bare rock then!"

"Good Heaven!" cried Lady Farnleigh; "call to her, Mr. Mat! call to her at all hazards! tell her not to move hand or foot for her life! I see the poor little thing plain enough; Do you not see, Kate....."

And she turned as she spoke, to where Kate had been standing on the lawn; but Kate was no longer there. They had all been looking up eagerly to the face of the cliff, and neither Ellingham nor Mr. Mat had seen her go.

"Kate is gone into the house," said Margaret; "she ran off without saying a word. No doubt she has gone to tell the servants."

Mr. Mat, putting his hands to his mouth so as to make them serve, as far as might be, the purpose of a speaking trumpet, hallooed to the child, whom they could all now see perfectly well,

to remain quite still; to take the best hold she could on the biggest bushes near her, and hold on without attempting to budgetill help could reach her.

But while he was calling to her—whether or not it may have been that she was startled by the voice from underneath her—she made another movement, which brought her two or three feet nearer to the limit of the bushes, and to the commencement of the bare rock,—and certain destruction.

Lady Farnleigh covered her eyes with her hand, and uttered a shuddering cry.

“By Heaven! she will be killed before our eyes!” cried Mr. Mat. “You run, Falconer! run for your life to the top of the cliff, by the path on the other side—you know, the path from Weston watermeads up to Shapton farm;—and get down to the child by the bushes. You’ll be faster than me; and I’ll be trying to get at her from below. Run for dear life, lad!”

But as he spoke, and while Lady Farnleigh was wringing her hands in distress, Miss Margaret was so overcome by her feelings that she suddenly threw herself backwards into Frederick Falconer’s arms, and went off incontinently into violent hysterics.

“It is impossible that I can leave Miss Lindisfarn in this state,” replied he, to Mr Mat’s appeal; “impossible or I would go at once.”

“Oh! don’t leave me! for pity’s sake don’t leave

me!" shrieked the young lady, opening her fine eyes for a moment—just long enough to shoot up into the face which was hanging over her, a glance which was not altogether hysterical in its expression—according, at least, to the strictly medical view of such matters.

"Put the lass down with her back on the turf!" said Mr. Mat in extreme disgust; "put the lass down! what hurt can she take? And see if you can help to save this poor child's life!"

"Oh! don't leave me! don't leave me!" sobbed Miss Margaret.

"Not for all the world," replied Freddy, in an intensely expressive whisper, with eye expression to match. "It is impossible for me to leave her," he said aloud, in answer to Mr. Mat; "don't you see that it is?"

Captain Ellingham had in the meantime contrived to clamber to the top of the half-ruinous arches, and was seeing whether it was possible for active limbs and a sure eye to scale the face of the cliff by that help.

"It is out of the question," cried Mr. Mat, "I tell you it is impossible! Wait while I run into the house to see what ladders they have."

"And ropes," returned Ellingham. "Above all a good coil of rope."

"Where's Kate?" cried Mr. Mat, as he turned to run into the house.

"I did not see her leave the lawn; I suppose she went into the house," returned Lady Farnleigh. "No doubt she went to get assistance. Since that gentleman does not choose to risk his precious limbs to save a poor girl's life," continued she, looking with a curling lip to the spot where Falconer was hanging over the reclining form of Miss Margaret, "you had better get some one of the servants to hasten to the top of the cliff and try to get down to her. Ellingham will be the man to climb it from below, if any human being can."

"Do you continue to encourage her to hold on for life, but to make no attempt to move, Lady Farnleigh; I will run and see what tackle can be got. You can make her hear you."

And, so saying, he and Mr. Mat hurried off together into the house.

In a very few minutes all the others of the party had run out from the house and were assembled on the lawn. As soon as ever Mr. Merriton understood the nature of the case, and the desirability that some one should if possible get to the top of the cliff, and attempt to descend thence to where the child was, he started off to make his way to the place.

"Take the gardener with you, Arthur, to show you the path up the cliff, and the spot at the top from which you must try the descent," said little Miss Merriton, with quiet presence of mind.

“And make him run his best. You can run well, Arthur.”

And then, quietly stepping into the house, she called all the menservants and maids, and set them to work to drag out featherbeds and mattresses, and spread them at the foot of the cliff.

“In case the poor little thing should fall, it might be the means of saving her,” she said to Lady Farnleigh. “I fear she would not fall sufficiently clear of the rocks to escape fatal injury; but it is a chance the more in her favour.”

While this was being done, Captain Ellingham and Mr. Mat were busily engaged in splicing together two long ladders, which had been brought out on to the lawn.

“Can you judge the height with your eye, Captain?” said Mr. Mat; “do you think we have length of ladder enough?”

“It is very difficult to say. I don’t know. We must try it. If I can only get to the lowest bushes, I’ll answer for the rest.”

“How can you possibly take the child off the cliff, when it will be as much as ever you can do to hold your own footing on it?” urged Mr. Mat.

“Only let me get at her; and I’ll answer for the rest. I’ll manage it, either upwards or back by the ladders. Now for it, let’s try the length!”

They raised the two ladders, tied together, with some difficulty, only to find that they were some

ten or twelve feet too short for the purpose. The lowest of the bushes grew at least that distance above the topmost rung of the ladder; and the child was now about half as much, or perhaps rather more than half as much, as high again above the commencement of the growth of plants.

"I'll tell you what it is," said Ellingham; "there is but one thing for it. We must get the ladders up and stand them on the top of the old cloister wall!"

"I doubt it," said Mr. Mat; "I doubt our raising the ladder there; and if you do succeed in getting it on end, it will be no joke attempting to go up it."

"Not a bit of it, only let us get the ladders up! I'll go up them safe enough! I'm good at a balance," returned Ellingham.

"Well, we can but try," said Mr. Mat. So, aided by the servants, the two gentlemen essayed, and by dint of great exertion, succeeded in raising the ladders against the cliff from the top of the crumbling old wall. Mr. Mat placed himself on the arch at the foot of the ladder, in order to hold and steady it to the utmost of his power and strength. But the task of ascending the two ladders, hastily lashed together, raised against an uneven surface of bare rock, and standing on the top of a rotten and crumbling old wall, was not an agreeable one; and all the other individuals of

the party assembled on the lawn looked on with breathless anxiety while Ellingham was about to attempt it.

All of them were there, with the exception of Frederick Falconer and Miss Margaret. For after Fred had declared, in reply to the appeal made to him for assistance, that he could not leave Margaret, and had pledged himself to that young lady herself not to "desert her," finding it unpleasant under the circumstances to remain under the observation of the people congregated on the lawn, specially of Lady Farnleigh and Mr. Mat, he had half carried half led the drooping and still hysterical girl into the drawing-room, and was there administering such bodily and mental consolation and comfort as her case required.

Ellingham was on the wall at the foot of the ladder, adjusting a coil of rope around his shoulders and neck in such a manner as to interfere as little as possible with his freedom of action, and was on the point of starting on his perilous enterprise, when the attention of those on the lawn was drawn to a movement among the bushes and brambles at the top of the cliff, just above the spot where the child was still clinging for dear life to the shrubs and crumbling soil, only a few feet above the commencement of the wholly naked part of the cliff. In the next minute it was evident to all of them that it was Kate Lindisfarn,

who was about to attempt descending the cliff to the child by the same path by which the latter had reached her present position of danger; who *was* attempting it rather; for without any hesitation or pause she began descending among the bushes.

Yes! it was Kate sure enough! Her light blue silk dress was distinguishable enough, and was unmistakable.

"No, no! Back, go back!" screamed Lady Farnleigh with the utmost power of her voice, and striving to enforce her words by waving signals with her hands. But Kate paid no attention to the warning, if she heard or observed it.

"Oh God! she will be killed, she will be killed!" screamed Lady Farnleigh, in an agony of distress.

"Let her try it, God bless her!" cried Mr. Mat, from the cloister wall, with much emotion; "Kate has a sure foot and a steady eye. She is Sillshire, Kate is!"

"Wait till I can join you Miss Lindisfarn! Wait a moment!" shouted Captain Ellingham, as loud as he could. "Tell her," he added to those below, "for God's sake to wait a minute till I can get to her!" and he hastened up the ladder.

Kate, however, either did not hear or did not pay any attention to any of the entreaties or warnings or advice screamed out to her, but con-

tinued her way down the cliff in a direct line to the spot where the little girl was clinging.

It thus became a sort of race which would reach the child first; and as Ellingham at the top of the ladder, and Kate descending the cliff, neared one another, they came within easy speaking distance of each other and of the object of their exertions.

The last step from the ladder to the face of the cliff was an exceedingly difficult one to make—was indeed more of the nature of a jump from the ladder into a bush, with the necessity of instantly on reaching it taking means with both hands and feet for retaining a position on the face of the cliff. None but a man of tried nerve, and sure of himself and of the perfection of the service he might expect at need from all his limbs, would have dreamed of attempting it. By none whatsoever could it be done without extreme danger. Kate had reached the spot where the child was, and had already clutched her arm with one hand while she held on to a bush above her with the other, before Ellingham had made this desperate jump; and she called to him not to attempt it.

“Don’t risk it, Captain Ellingham, there is no need! I can get back with her to the top very well. It is all easy, after this first bit is passed. Go down the ladder, for Heaven’s sake! and send somebody round to meet me at the top of the cliff.”

"No, no! I can jump it! I can't let you risk clambering to the top without help. It is one thing to make your own way, and quite another to drag another person with you. Here goes !....."

"Oh, don't do it!" shrieked Kate, hiding her eyes with her hand. But in the next instant the spring had been made, and he was standing clinging to the bushes in comparative safety by her side. A shout from those on the lawn below, and a special hurrah from Mr. Mat, showed the interest with which Ellingham's progress had been watched. His success, moreover, besides securing his own safety, was a tolerably sufficient guarantee for that of Kate, and the child whose danger had caused so much trouble and distress. For it was pretty clear that the man who had accomplished the feat of activity that they had just witnessed, would not fail in the far easier task of assisting his two charges to the summit in safety.

And then, with very few words between them, save such as were needed for directing them to place a foot here, and grasp a twig there, and one or two little attempts on Kate's part at protesting against Ellingham's determination to place himself, as they struggled upwards, between them and the precipice, so that he might have a chance of repairing the mishap of a slip of the foot, or the failure of a hand-grasp, the three of them reached the top in safety.

Then, indeed, there were words to be said. There was the frightened child to be interrogated in the first place. It appeared that the case was exactly as Mr. Mat had guessed it. The pet lamb had struggled over the brow, gradually finding its way down the steep among the herbage; and the child had wandered after it, almost equally unconscious of the danger she was approaching, till the increasing steepness of the slope, and the crumbling of the soil under her feet, and the impossibility of retracing her steps, revealed it to her.

A few minutes after they had reached the top, Mr. Merriton, breathless, and the gardener came up. The former threw himself down on the ground as soon as he saw them—it was very evident that he had done his utmost to reach the spot in time.

“Oh, Miss Lindisfarn! What a relief it is to see you in safety! Captain Ellingham, I congratulate you, but I cannot help envying you your good fortune!” he panted out.

And then they returned at their leisure to the Friary, taking the little girl with them as their prize and proof of their prowess.

And Kate admitted, in going down the steep path on the Silverton side of the cliff to the water-meadows, that an arm would be acceptable to her; and the path was difficult enough to make her sensible that she had a very firm one supporting

her, as they returned to the friends who were so anxiously awaiting them.

It is not necessary to set forth in detail how during the rest of the afternoon the adventure of the Cliff pushed the projected antiquarian investigations aside, somewhat to the disgust of the two seniors of the party—how Kate and Captain Ellingham were (to speak in Twelfth-night phraseology) King and Queen of the evening—or how Margaret and Fred Falconer discreetly kept themselves as much as possible in the background, sufficiently consoled for that position by the fact of occupying it together.

It will be enough to state, that though Mr. Frederick was exceedingly well-pleased to have made such progress, and so coupled himself with the Lindisfarn co-heiress as to make him feel tolerably sure in his enterprise, and though he was genuinely and honestly much attracted by the beauty which, during the little comedy of the afternoon, Margaret had submitted to his attention under a variety of interesting circumstances and combinations,—nevertheless he was very sensible of the cost at which he had bought this success as regarded the heiress; and he was not pleased with her for having been the cause of his making but a sorry figure before the rest of the assembled party.

Might not he also, just as easily as Merriton,

have run to the top of the cliff, and played a creditable part, without troubling himself with the danger of descending it ?

As for Captain Ellingham, it may be said that, before leaving the Friary, he had become entirely convinced that he was, or rather had been, the goose which Lady Farnleigh had called him, and was very earnestly purposed to be so no more.

Kate for her part was somewhat silent and thoughtful as she returned in the carriage to the Chase ; and part of her thoughts were that her godmamma had been well within the mark when she had characterised the Silverton *arbiter elegantiarum* in a word of four letters. She began to fear indeed that it would need six ; and one of them a double-u- to do it rightly.

END OF PART V.

Part Sixth.

CHAPTER XV.

THE "CARTE DE TENDRE."

THAT gathering at the Friary for archæological purposes, which were so little served by it, was a memorable one to several of the persons who had been present at it.

It was very memorable to little Dinah Wilkins, the child who had so nearly come to grief on the Nosey Stone, and whose indiscretion in straying thither had produced—as indiscretions will—so much trouble, and so many consequences, to people with whom it would have seemed that she and her indiscretions could have had so little to do. She turned out to be a granddaughter of old Granny Wilkins, at Weston, Lady Farnleigh's old pensioner, very well known to that lady and to Kate, and a still greater object of interest therefore to the latter, as soon as, in the progress of that heroic descent of the face of the cliff, she

had got near enough to her to recognize her. It was a memorable day to little Dinah Wilkins, not only from the fright, the danger, the minutes of mortal anguish—hours they had seemed to her—during which she had been expecting to slip from her precarious position, and be dashed to instant death, every moment; not only from the incidents of that wonderful rescue by the exertions of the gentlefolks, the history of which, and the interest attending it, made the cottage of old Granny Wilkins a centre of attraction to half Weston for days afterwards; but memorable also from the permanent influence the circumstances exercised in shaping the future course and destinies of the child's after-life, in a manner which may, perhaps, be told in a future chapter—or which possibly may not find any place for telling in the course of this narrative, seeing that, though they were curiously mixed up with the subsequent history of several of our *dramatis personæ*, they are not essentially necessary to the understanding of the main thread of the narrative.

The archæological meeting *manqué* was also a memorable day to Arthur Merriton. The incidents of it acquired for him a place in the Sillshire social world, and in Sillshire opinion, which the peculiarities of his character and position might otherwise perhaps have been slow to win for him. Captain Ellingham perceived and

said that he was "a fellow of the right sort!" Mr. Mat declared that he had the true stuff and the making of a Sillshire man in him. Lady Farnleigh said it was a great mistake to suppose that real manliness of character and all the best qualities generally included in the term, were only to be found allied with one class of idiosyncrasies and one set of habits and pursuits, or were incompatible with nervous shyness and dreaminess of manner and mind. And she unreservedly admitted to Kate that this second admirer of hers was not a prig, nor anything describable by any such obnoxious four letters. And the good opinion of Lady Farnleigh and Mr. Mat, operating both separately in different spheres, and also with mutually corroborating force in the same sphere, could go a long way towards making a good position for a man in Silverton and its neighbourhood. But what was the use of being recognized to be a fellow of the right sort, and to have the true stuff in him, to a man who, for his own part, recognized only this—that he was desperately in love, and that there was very little or no hope for him. And that was the frame of mind in which Arthur Merriton had walked down from the top of the Weston Cliff to his own beautiful house at the foot of it, with the gardener and little Dinah Wilkins following behind him, and Kate Lindisfarn and Captain Ellingham, arm in arm, in front.

It was characteristic of the man, that he perceived at once, or imagined that he perceived, that his case was hopeless. Many a man would not have admitted for himself, or judged for another that it was, or ought to have been so. All that large and potent class of considerations which have so great and often so paramount a share in managing Hymen's affairs, and which make Dan Cupid laugh at his business-like brother Godship for always going about with a parchment deed under his arm, and a pen stuck behind his ear—all considerations of that sort were entirely in Merriton's favour. Of course his eyes were opened as to Falconer's business at the Chase, and his chances of winning the hand of Kate Lindisfarn. But this view of misery had only dissolved itself to make way for the appearance of a succeeding view, as terrible, and more substantial. Ellingham was evidently the rival he had to fear. Old Mr. Falconer might talk, and nod, and smile meaningly to the end of time if he pleased; but after that arrival at the top of the cliff together, with Dinah Wilkins in their joint charge, and that walking down into the valley arm in arm, as they returned from their joint exploit, Arthur Merriton judged it to be a hopeless case. He knew that Ellingham was a very poor man; that Miss Lindisfarn was an heiress of no small mark and position; that his own status

in the matter of fortune was such as in the opinion of a prudent father might justify him in pretending to her hand. He knew—I suppose—that he was a very good-looking fellow. Many girls—young ones chiefly of the sentimental sort, who admire “sallow, sublime sort of Werther-faced” men—would have considered him a much handsomer man than Captain Ellingham. He was well-educated, cultivated, gentlemanlike, and could read Dante with Kate, which Captain Ellingham could not. And Kate liked reading Dante, and that sort of thing, too. But Merriton judged all this to be of no avail; and deemed his love hopeless. “Faint heart never won fair lady!” says the proverb—half-true, keeping its promise to the ear and breaking it to the sense like a Sybilline oracle, as is the wont of such utterances of the wisdom of ages. I think I have seen the faint heart win, when the confident one was nowhere! But it all depends on what it is that is to be won. You may catch gudgeons with bait that won’t do for a trout. Fred Falconer in Merriton’s place would not have deemed the matter hopeless, nor have given up the game. But if Ellingham had been at the bottom of the sea—having reached that destination, it is to be understood, before, not after, that memorable archæological party—I think the fainter heart would have had the better chance of winning the fair lady.

Arthur Merriton, however, being Arthur Merriton and not Frederick Falconer, did feel as he walked down behind Kate and Ellingham, that it was a hopeless case; and, it may be feared, did not feel in a particularly affectionate frame of mind towards little Dinah Wilkins whom he had toiled so hard to preserve.

To Captain Ellingham the day was an especially memorable day. It is more than forty years ago, and the gallant Captain was on the wrong side of thirty at the time; but he has not forgotten that day, not any smallest detail of the incidents of it, yet! To him also it was a day of a great unsealing of the eyes. If his destiny had been so malignant as to have accorded him at once his heart's desire, and thrown the lovely Margaret, the "most beautiful creature he had ever seen in his life," into his arms as soon as his eye had fallen in love with her! If there had been no fairy godmother to tell him that he was a goose, and knew nothing about the matter, and he had been allowed to follow his own blind fancies—to think of the wreck! But what about the matter as it stood now? As to the two girls—"Lombard street to a China orange!" as people used to say in those days. There could be no doubt about it, as he saw the matter now, that Kate was not only, as Lady Farnleigh declared she was, the finer girl of the two, by daylight, but

the noblest-hearted, the bravest—(it is a mistake, *voyez vous, Mesdames*; to suppose that any man, except one whose weakness inclines him to mate with something weaker still, admires a woman for being cowardly; so you may as well dispense with all those little tricks and prettinesses, the scope of which is to make it evident that your nerves are not equal to meeting a mouse in single combat)—the truest—he would have said the jolliest, but that the vigour and aptitude of that expression as applied to a young lady, had not been discovered by that backward and slow generation—the best, the dearest girl in all creation. That was a fact never more to be disputed or doubted, clear as the sun at noonday.

But what then? How did that very evident fact—evident to others as well as to him, unfortunately—interest him? Was it to be supposed that the co-heiress of the Lindisfarn estates would be permitted to marry a man, who, despite the noble blood in his veins, and the aristocratic prefix to his name, was absolutely dependent for his bread on a profession, which had hitherto afforded him so little of that necessary article? That animal Falconer, who had been intimate with them all his life, was, as far as fortune went, in a position to calculate on the approbation of the lady's family. There might be a hope, perhaps indeed a lurking conviction, at the bottom of his

heart, that Kate was not the girl to give her heart to such a man as Mr. Frederick Falconer. But then there was Merriton; a gentleman, a real good fellow, a man of fortune, a much better looking fellow, as Captain Ellingham reflected again and again, than he was, far more calculated by his education and pursuits to adapt himself to one side of Kate's character and tastes; and it was plain to see that he was desperately smitten with her. Captain Ellingham went over all these considerations carefully and dispassionately, as he thought, while he sate the following night, long after he ought to have turned into his cot, by the light of a smoky lamp, in the not very magnificent cabin of His Majesty's revenue cutter, the *Petrel*. And he, too, though few braver or bolder men stepped a deck in the English navy, was faint-hearted in this matter of winning an heiress.

In fact, if an elderly gentleman *qui mores hominum multorum vidit et urbes*—which means, “who has observed the loves and the love-making of many men and women”—might have the pleasant privilege of whispering a word of counsel in a transparent pink little ear, he would say: “Give that faint-heart-and-fair-lady proverb the lie; and of two aspirants, incline rather, *cæteris paribus*—(which, being translated, means, supposing both of them to possess a similar number of thousands a year, and an equally heroic outline

of face)—to give the preference to the faint-hearted over the confident-hearted swain."

Captain Ellingham *was*, as has been said, faint-hearted in this matter, and dared not allow himself to believe that Kate Lindisfarn, so beautiful, so much admired, so gay, so light-hearted, so fancy-free, with every right to look forward to a brilliant position in life, could be brought to think for an instant of *him*, a rough sailor, hardly a young man in the eyes of a girl in her teens, with a rough brown face, tanned and bronzed and hardened by exposure to wind and weather; at odds with Fortune, too, and not the better fitted for shining in drawing-rooms, or winning the ear of youth and beauty, by the discipline of his long tussle with that fickle jade. Pooh, pooh! what had he to do with falling in love with heiresses in their teens? *That* was his proper place (viz. the sufficiently dull and dreary looking cabin of his cutter), and his profession the only mistress he should think of wooing.

And Kate? Was the day of the archæological visit to the Friary a memorable one to her also? Fancy-free, Captain Ellingham had called her, in his mental survey of all the conditions of the case that made up his hopelessness. *Was* she so wholly fancy-free? The amount and extent of fancy captivity which could be predicated of her in the case of Fred Falconer has been explained, with, it

is hoped, sufficient care to avoid representing it to have been more than it really was. But how about it *now*? That day of archæological investigation, if it had eventually failed to finally settle the great question of the date of the Friary wash-house, had, nevertheless, done much towards the investigation of some other things. It had been a great day for the unsealing of blinded eyes. Several persons saw several things clearly which they had never seen before. And I think we may say that thenceforward Kate was fancy-free as regarded Freddy Falconer. He had both done and left undone much which had contributed to this result. And Kate was safely enough off with the old.....no, I must not say that. The cautious old proverb does not hit the case. Besides, it would insinuate what I have no right to insinuate at this stage of Kate's history.

Still all this beating about the bush does not answer the question whether Kate Lindisfarn was fancy-free from and after that day at the Friary?

Well! It is so difficult to be categorical in such matters. Merriton, who walked behind her and Ellingham, as they returned from the top of the cliff, had a strong opinion upon the subject. I am sure he would have boxed his own ears rather than have suffered them to catch a word of conversation that was not intended for them. Yet he *did* form a very strong opinion. But then, on the

other hand, he was very far from being an impartial observer. It is certain that Kate was remarkably, and, for her, singularly silent and abstracted as they returned in the carriage to the Chase. For Mr. Mat told Lady Farnleigh afterwards, that finding that Kate would not talk, and not feeling any inclination to talk with Margaret, with whom he had been not a little disgusted in the course of the day, he had pretended to go to sleep; but had remained quite awake to the fact that hardly a word passed between the sisters on their way home.

And then again, judging from the sequel.....if it did not date from that day, we know that it was there soon after.

What was where?

Pshaw! You know what I mean. There is no doubt that she was fond of him during that ensuing winter, I suppose.

Ah! but in these heart histories chronology is everything. Let us be chronological, whatever we are. Was Kate Lindisfarn fancy-free when, having assisted Ellingham in getting little Dinah Wilkins to the top of the cliff, and being assisted by him in getting herself up, and having exchanged congratulations, &c., and panted in unison when the top was reached, and having walked down by the steep path arm in arm back again to the Friary, and having, with all due mutual self-denegations,

and "No! it was you, who," and "Don't you remember," and so forth, shared between them the applause and hero-worship of the rest of the party during the remainder of the evening, they separated with not unmeaning touch of palm to palm at parting.....was Kate fancy-free *then*, I say? That is the question.

Well, we know what girls are. It has been said, "Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you what you are." And it might with quite as much truth be said, Tell me whom a girl falls in love with, and I will tell you what she is;—or *vice versa*, Tell me what she is, and I will tell you with whom she is likely to fall in love. A pleasing exterior, a handsome face and well-formed person, are naturally, and in accordance with superior arrangements, the wisdom of which we cannot and may not question, potent conciliators and attractors of woman's love. But there is no more significant symptom of the high level of moral character and nobility of heart prevailing among Englishwomen, than the all but universality of the sentiment which makes an absence of these advantages, if compensated by a touch of heroism, more acceptable to them than any perfection of personal attraction in combination with a manifest deficiency of all heroism.

The quick sudden heart-beat; the violent ebb of the blood, which left the cheek deadly pale, to

be succeeded in the next instant by a rush of the rich colour to face and brow and neck; the mixture of exulting pleasure with the short sharp agony of terror, which had caused Kate to shade her eyes with her hand, at the moment that Ellingham had made his desperate leap from the ladder to the bush on the cliff-face beside her,—all this told of a sympathy between their two natures deeper and far more powerful than any such mere liking and inclination as might have been produced by the ball-room wooing of the most faultless of Hyperions. And if exactitude of chronology in the matter of the birth of young love in this case be insisted on, my impression is that the register may, with the greatest chance of absolute accuracy, date from the moment when Captain Ellingham alighted in the bushes from that perilous jump.

Just as if any fellow would not jump into any bush for such a prize!

Yes, my ingenuous young British friends! There are plenty of you who would, and some who get the chance, and do such things. And a discriminating and appreciating public in crinoline and pork-pie hats does accordingly adore those of you who do them, and generously give credit for good intentions to those of you who don't get the chance of doing them. But somehow or other

that—one would say upon the whole, perhaps, not specially profound—pork-pie-hatted public, does, mark you, contrive most astonishingly to nose the hollow pretences of those few among you, who having the chance, would do nothing of the kind.

And then the party at Wanstrow came off. And Margaret had to be asked by the hostess in a clear and ringing voice, before all the assembled party, whether she had entirely recovered from her indisposition at the Friary? And Freddy had to be complimented as audibly upon the admirable skill and tact he had shown in managing and tending symptoms, which the habits and ways of the Silvertown young ladies—doubtless by reason of the fine Silshire air and climate—had probably never given him any opportunity of studying.

Lady Farnleigh took very good care upon this occasion that Ellingham should have Kate for his neighbour at dinner; and his inquiries about little Dinah Wilkins, and Kate's replies and her report of all the gratitude, and the wonder, and the blessings which she was charged to convey to him from old Dame Wilkins, and from the child's mother, made them feel like old friends, who had a variety of subjects in common between them. And then the sailing party had to be talked over. And Captain Ellingham explained that it was not

so much the quantity as the quality of the wind, that might make the excursion disagreeable to ladies. And he enquired how far Kate would choose to brave the chance of a ducking, as the cutter was apt, under certain conditions to be wet.

“As for being afraid of anything a capful of wind is likely to bring you, that I know I need not suspect you of, Miss Lindisfarn,” said he, “but you may not like to get wet through with salt-water. And what about the others?”

“Oh, Margaret will be ready whenever you give the word. I don’t think she would mind a capful of wind, as you call it. Why do sailors always talk of caps full of wind?”

“I cannot tell what the origin of the term may have been; a corruption from some very different word, perhaps. But it is curious how nearly definite a quantity it signifies in nautical language.”

“And what amount of trouble would a capful of wind give the *Petrel*!” asked Kate.

“Oh! no trouble at all, except to cause the helmsman a little extra vigilance and activity. The *Petrel* is a capital sea boat, but she is what we call lively; apt to jump about a good deal, and wet her decks when there is any sea; and that you know would not be pleasant for ladies.”

"But then it comes pretty nearly to waiting for a calm; and there would be no fun in that. I should so much better like to make acquaintance with your pet *Petrel*, when she is in one of her lively moods. What signifies a little wetting? One does not catch cold with salt water, they say; and we should come home and get dry."

"But you forget, Miss Lindisfarn, that I cannot answer for the movements of my *Petrel* with the certainty you can count on Birdie. We may go out with a wind and not be able to return quite so soon as we expect. I strongly recommend, especially if we are to take a windy day, that everybody should take a change of clothes with them."

"Yes! that would be the plan. And if we got kept out all night, what capital fun it would be. Do, pray, Captain Ellingham, let us choose a day when there is a capful of wind. I should so like to see the *Petrel* lively."

"Well, if Lady Farnleigh will consent, I have no objection. Only remember that wind is one of those good things that you may have too much of."

"Oh, what a very cautious and prudent man you are!"

"That is a high compliment to a sailor. Pray make that opinion known to my Lords of the Admiralty."

And Lady Farnleigh's consent was obtained for the selection of a day, when, if possible, without having too much of a good thing, the *Petrel* should be seen in one of her livelier moods. And the proposed excursion came off accordingly. And the *Petrel* retained sufficient discretion amid her liveliness to bring them all back to port before nightfall although rather in a bedraggled condition, as Captain Ellingham had predicted. And Kate had rendered him more desperately in love with her than ever by the intoxication of high spirits with which she had enjoyed her sail. She declared that it was glorious, and she was almost inclined to think even better than being on Birdie, when she was at her liveliest.

And thus, sometimes in one way, and sometimes in another, sometimes at Lindisfarn, sometimes at Wanstrow, sometimes at the Friary, and once or twice in Silverton, all the members of the little circle with whom the reader has been made acquainted, saw a good deal of each other during the remainder of the autumn months, and through the winter. But as the only net result of all this was to render more definite, clear, and palpable to themselves and to the friends around them, those relations of the parties to each other, which were foreshadowed by the previous intercourse between them, and which the judicious reader has already

distinguished spinning themselves out of the filaments of fate in the *chiaroscuro* of the future, it will not be necessary to follow with historical accuracy all the pleasant processes of this destiny-spinning.

It will be sufficient for our purpose to present a brief and succinct, but accurate report of the state of the warp and woof, which had been produced by the time when the birds begin to sing, by all the sailing, and riding, and walking, and talking, and dancing, and laughing, and pleasant intercourse of all kinds, which go to the spinning of fate's filaments in this department of human affairs.

Frederick Falconer, like a sensible and business-like man, who when he has made a resolution acts up to it, had consistently carried out the programme he had drawn up for himself. Forsaking all others, he had steadily set himself to the work of winning Margaret Lindisfarn. And that work had to all appearance progressed satisfactorily, not only to the principals themselves, but to the lookers-on at the game. We have obtained a sufficient peep into the sanctuary of Kate's heart, to assure us, that her whilom admirer's far more declared and evident homage to her sister awakened no shadow of jealousy or pain there. Lady Farnleigh's declaration that

Freddy Falconer might make love to any girl in the county, for aught she cared, provided he did not do so to her goddaughter, seemed to include her goddaughter's sister in its licence. The young gentleman stood well, as has been said, in the Silverton public estimation; the old banker was well known to be a very warm man; and there appeared to be no reasons of any sort why Miss Lindisfarn's family should not consider that his only son was a very proper match in all respects for one of the co-heiresses. Mr. Frederick's own sentiments on the matter we are already in possession of. As to those of Margaret, a greater degree of reticence and more reserve are proper in handling the delicate topic of a young lady's feelings upon such a subject. Nevertheless, perhaps, the judicious reader may have acquired a sufficient insight into Miss Margaret's idiosyncrasy to enable him to estimate pretty accurately the state of her feelings and the nature of her views. There can be no harm in saying that she really did like Frederick very much. She thought him very agreeable and very handsome. But it will of course be understood—at least by those who are conversant with the system on which Margaret had been educated, and with the results of it on the development of docile and well-disposed pupils—that it would have appeared to her the

height of unworthiness, and even of indelicacy, to permit such feelings and considerations to stand in the way of her transferring her affections to a worthier object—say a wealthy peer of the realm, or a commoner with a hundred thousand a year—should such an one present himself before the final adjudication of the prize.

As to Kate.....what can be said? The subject is a less pleasing one, both for the veracious historian to set forth, and for the well-regulated mind of the reader to contemplate. A right-minded heroine, who has any claim to the title, and behaves herself as such, never allows herself, as we all know, to feel the slightest preference for any individual of the other sex, until she has received a declaration of love and demand for her hand in due form. Then and thereupon, she may, if she think fit, forthwith feel and acknowledge the tender passion in any degree of intensity. The “popping of the question” is supposed to act, in short, like the opening of an Artesian well, through which, when it has once reached the secret reservoir of the still waters, hidden from every eye, deep, deep away below the surface, they rush forth with impetuosity, and in the most copious abundance. Till that last bit of the lover’s work has been accomplished, no sign of the living water rewards his toil. This is the

true and correct theory of love, as practised and understood by the most authorized heroines.

But poor Kate's education had not, unhappily, been such as efficiently to prepare her for the vocation. She was impetuous, we know. She was apt to permit the consciousness of a pure and guileless heart to hurry her into a practice of following its dictates, without waiting to compare them, as she should have done, with the text of the laws made and provided for the regulation of a heroine's sentiments.

In short—for the truth must come out, sooner or later—by the time the spring came, Kate was thoroughly in love with Captain Ellingham, though he had said no word of love to her. Not but that she had kept her own secret so well that he had no suspicion of it; whereas he had by no means been equally successful in keeping his. Women are more lynx-eyed in these matters than men. Though she would not allow it even to her own self in the secrecy of her maiden meditations, at the bottom of her heart there was a consciousness and a persevering little voice that would not be silenced, which told her she was loved.

And she was happy with a very perfect happiness in the consciousness of it, although he had spoken no word, and although she was perfectly aware of the bearings of that business-like aspect

of the matter, which to him seemed a well-nigh insuperable barrier between them. She knew perfectly well her own position and the value of it. She knew his position; and felt upon the subject as a loving woman in such circumstances does feel. Nor did she conceive that there was any great difficulty to be overcome in the matter. She had no doubt that it would all come right. Was there not the fairy godmother, who saw it all, of course, though she said nothing; and understood it all?

And as for Ellingham himself? His part in this stage of the drama was a less happy one. He had suffered himself to become irremediable engrossed by a passion which he greatly feared must be a hopeless one. And the sort of manner and tone, and conduct which his fear caused him to impose on himself towards Kate, would have either puzzled, or offended, or pained a girl more on the look-out for flirtations, more on the *qui vive* to watch for the manifestations of admiration and the results of it, either for the encouragement or discouragement of them—more self-conscious, in a word, than Kate was in this matter.

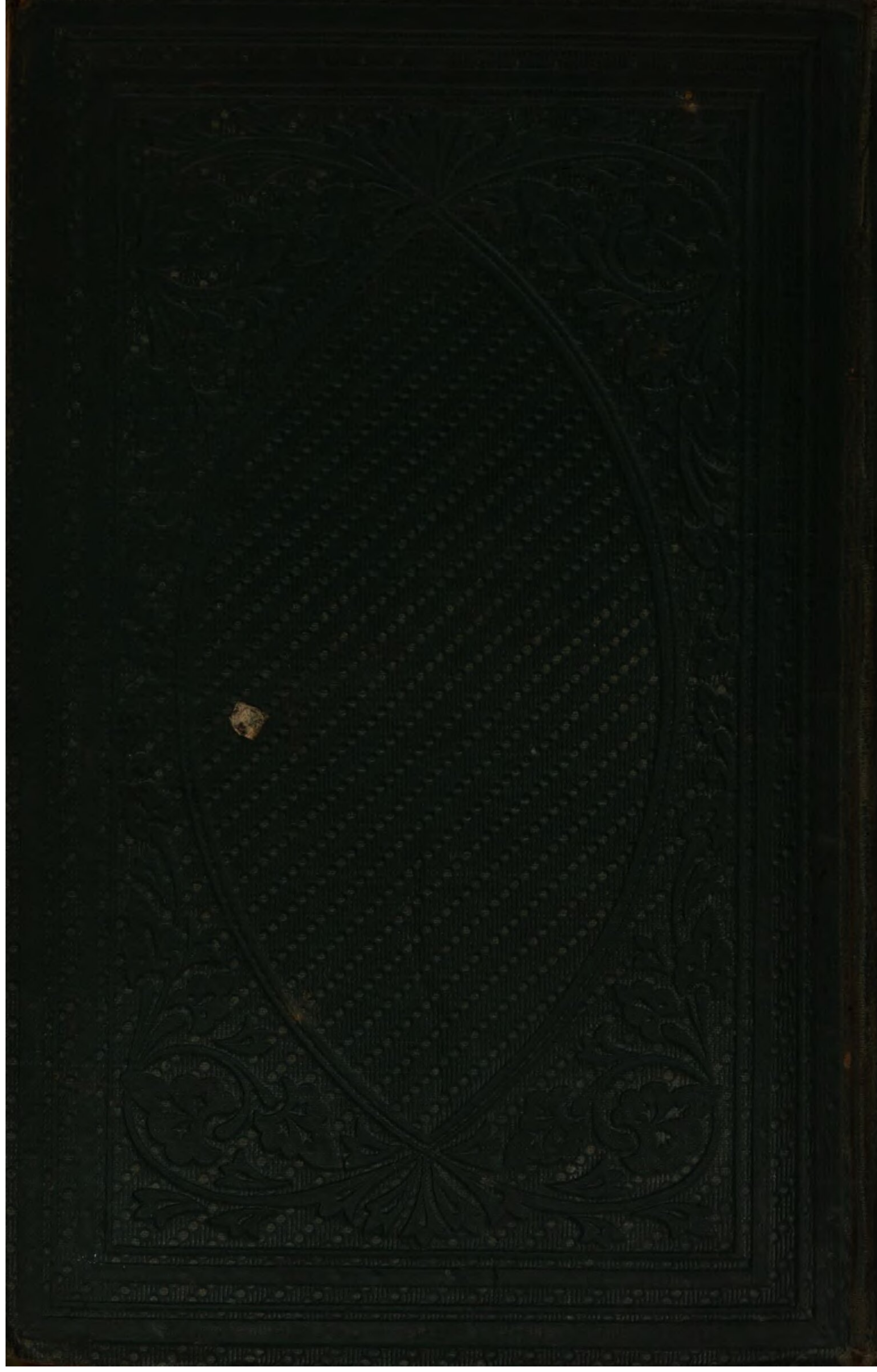
And yet, notwithstanding Ellingham's fears and discouragements, it was impossible for him not to perceive a difference in Kate's manner towards him and towards Arthur Merriton. But with self-

tormenting perverseness, he told himself that this was only caused by poor Merriton's assiduous and unconcealed admiration. It was plain enough that there was no hope for him; and that Kate found it necessary to show him as much. Probably, if Merriton were as cautious and self-restrained in his manner towards her as he himself was, her tone towards him would be as frankly friendly as it was towards himself.

And thus is completed, I think, the *carte de tendre* as laid down from a survey of the hearts of the principal members of our *dramatis personæ* in the early spring of the year following Margaret Lindisfarn's return to her paternal home.

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